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AN

ALARM

TO THE

CHURCH of SCOTLAND,

ON THE

Apparent Prevalence of a WORLDLY above a SPIRITUAL and RELIGIOUS INTEREST in her SUPREME JUDICATORY.

EXEMPLIFIED IN

The PROCEEDINGS of the last GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

In a LETTER from a Member thereof to a Reverend Brother.

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AN

AN ALARM TO THE CHURCH of SCOTLAND.

In a LETTER to a Reverend Brother.

SECTION I.

Apology for accuſing the prevailing party of a worldly ſpirit.

R. and D. B.

WHEN you deſired my thoughts in writing, upon the procedure of the laſt Aſſembly, I believe you had the ſame impreſſion with me, that their conduct boded no good to the intereſt of true religion among us, nor had any favourable aſpect upon that which we ought never to loſe ſight of, the eternal ſalvation of the precious ſouls of our people. Indeed it was in this light, chiefly, that their actings ſtruck me. That there are differences of opinion among us, in relation to the external circumſtances of diſcipline and church-government, can be matter of ſurpriſe to no body. And if none of the opinions which prevailed in oppoſition to our ſentiments, had ſeemed to ariſe from a ſhameful indifference about the ſucceſs of the goſpel, nor had any tendency to ſtop its progreſs; perhaps neither you, nor I, would feel the ſame concern which we do upon this occaſion.

I am ſenſible, what a handle may be afforded, by this way of ſpeaking, to the abettors of the prevailing meaſures, to ſet ſuch expreſſions in an odious and invidious light. And, indeed, I muſt own, that nothing can be more provoking than the imputation which ſeems to be inſinuated above, eſpecially to thoſe

who are not conſcious of any wrong motives or views. And therefore it is neceſſary here to explain my meaning a little more fully.

I am far from ſaying, or even thinking, that all who approve the meaſures of the majority are bad men. I know ſome of them too well, to entertain any ſuch thought. But as we have too much reaſon to conclude, that, in the very beſt and pureſt churches upon earth, eſpecially ſuch as have a civil eſtabliſhment, by far the greateſt part are yet in a natural and unrenewed ſtate, (I hope we may ſtill uſe theſe antiquated phraſes, at leaſt among ourſelves); ſo we need not doubt, that this church reſembles every particular believer, in whom the fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the fleſh. There is a carnal or worldly, and a ſpiritual or religious intereſt in a conſtant ſtruggle within it. I hope there are a goodly number among us, who have a prevailing concern for the ſucceſs of goſpel-ordinances in promoting the ſalvation of ſouls, and who keep this, as their main end, habitually in view, in the meaſures which they proſecute in church-judicatories. But, on the other hand, may it not be ſuppoſed without breach of charity, that there are likewiſe not a few among us, who have no real or hearty concern for the flouriſhing of practical religion, or ſerious godlineſs? If any ſuch are in eminent ſtations in church or ſtate, is it not ſuppoſable that their meaſures in church-judicatories may be influenced by theſe diſpoſitions? And may there not be ſome relics of theſe infirmities even in ſome good men themſelves? Where a concern for the intereſt of religion is true and ſincere, may it not ſometimes be in too low a degree, to be able always to reſiſt the violent temptations we are frequently expoſed to? And are not even truly honeſt and upright men liable to be impoſed upon by the artful miſrepreſentations, and the ſpecious and plauſible reaſonings of ingenious, but more deſigning friends? eſpecially when their connections, dependencies, or worldly views are all in favour of the argument? and thus be led to abet meaſures, which they never would have originally propoſed, and to ſwell the number of thoſe who are artfully promoting the intereſt of irreligion, in the judicatories of Chriſt's inſtitution, into a prevailing majority?

This is ſo far from being an impoſſible ſuppoſition, that, on the contrary, it is extremely rare to find the church in a different condition, eſpecially after it has enjoyed any conſiderable meaſure of peace or temporal proſperity. For this I appeal to the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, and particularly to the grievous complaints of the ancient prophets *, and to the account given in the

* Iſ. xxix. 10. Jer. ii. 8. v. 31. x. 21. & xxiii. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 2. Micah iii. 11, &c.

New

New Teſtament of the ſtate of the Jewiſh church, and its courts of judicature, in the time of our Saviour and his apoſtles. I might alſo appeal to the hiſtory of the Chriſtian church, and of eccleſiaſtic councils, after it got a civil ſettlement, and had a correſpondence with princes and courts, and the great men of the world. Then, it is but too well known, the myſtery of iniquity began ſoon to work; and the man of ſin to be gradually revealed, till at length he triumphed over every appearance of true religion, and impudently ſat in the temple of God.

Now, when this is, in any meaſure, the caſe of a church, when the worldly intereſt is manifeſtly prevailing, and abetted by a majority in the ſupreme court; can it be a queſtion, whether this ought always to be diſſembled; or if it be not proper and neceſſary to lay open our wounds in order to a cure? It is true, that the characters of ſome who may happen to be in important ſtations, muſt be thereby expoſed, and perhaps their uſefulneſs impeded. But becauſe the probing of a wound may hurt the patient, is it therefore a good office to let it feſter, and perhaps endanger his life? Were the prophets acting an immoral part in the ſharp rebukes they gave to the prieſts and falſe prophets in the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah? Was it in contradiction to his own great law of charity, that our Saviour ſo ſeverely expoſed the conduct of the Scribes and Phariſees? And in after ages, who were moſt to blame, the majority of the clergy, who were inſtrumental in carrying on the corruption and degeneracy of the church? or ſuch writers as Gregory Nazianzen, Salvian, Gildas, Petrarch, &c.? not to mention Zuingli, us, Luther, and the whole train of the reformers.

The deciſion, therefore, of this queſtion, Whether it be conſiſtent with the charity we owe our brethren, to expoſe their miſbehaviour in church-judicatories? muſt neceſſarily depend upon the real ſtate of the fact. If the meaſures purſued by our preſent leaders are calculated for promoting true piety and the practice of religion, and do indeed contribute to the edification of the body of Chriſt; I own, I ſtand convicted of calumny, and muſt anſwer for all its conſequences. I do not refuſe to ſay with Salvian, *Sed gravis eſt forſitan hæc atque iniqua congeſtio, Gravis profectò, ſi falſa.* But if, on the contrary, they have an obvious and direct tendency to the deſtruction of ſerious religion, to ſcatter and divide the flock of Chriſt, to render miniſters uſeleſs or worſe, to deprive our people of goſpel-ordinances, and to obſtruct their edification by them; then let the impartial judge, whether it is not high time to lay open the conduct of our preſent managers, and, without entering into the reſpective motives of particular perſons, which are beſt known to the Searcher of hearts, and without paſſing a judgment on the ge-

neral character of any one, to expoſe the nature, and point out the conſequences of their meaſures, to the view of ſuch honeſt individuals, as have been unwarily involved therein. For this purpoſe, let us only beſtow a little attention upon the proceedings of the laſt General Aſſembly.

SECTION II.

The charge made good. Firſt, by their giving the chair to a noted champion for the ſtage. The fatal influence of the public diverſions on the corruption of manners. The countenance given to them by this ſtep of the Aſſembly. That Chriſtian reformation is not promoted by comedy or tragedy.

THE firſt ſtep of their procedure that gave offence to me, as well as to many others, was the very firſt thing they did, viz. the choice they made of a Moderator. As I have little or no perſonal acquaintance with him, and am not to impeach his behaviour in the chair; the only circumſtance in his character that I am to mention, is one that is abundantly notorious, and for which he was a pannel before another Aſſembly. I mean the offenſive zeal whereby he diſtinguiſhed himſelf in countenancing and promoting the licentious entertainments of the ſtage, and that too at a time when ſuch exhibitions were in defiance of the ſalutary law of the land, or, at leaſt, an eluding it by ſo groſs an artifice as even a tricking ſharper might be aſhamed of, and which was, ſurely, below the character of any of our judges, and far more of any miniſter of the goſpel to encourage.

All ſerious Chriſtians, who have a juſt concern for the eternal ſalvation of precious and periſhing ſouls, have long lamented that extravagant paſſion for theatrical entertainments, the *Shake-ſpearomania*, as it has been ſometimes called, that has taken poſſeſſion of almoſt all in the higher ranks of life, and is gradually ſpreading among the lower. It was eaſy to foreſee what effect this would have upon people's manners. And now experience has juſtified our fears, even beyond all the ideas that any body durſt venture to conceive ſome time ago. A tranſient glance of our news-papers and magazines is enough to convince us, who have the happineſs to live retired from the great world, how effectually religion is extinguiſhed among thoſe who are intoxicated with the public diverſions. Diverſions indeed! they have proved, from the great buſineſs of a rational creature. Not to

mention

mention the worſhip of God being almoſt utterly abandoned, being, in a family-way, inconſiſtent with (forſooth) preferable engagements, and, in every way, inſipid and contemptible to them, who, in proportion to their taſte for plays, and other glittering amuſements, are apt to loſe all reliſh for every thing that is ſerious, and that puts them in mind of another world; are not fornication, and adultery, and all manner of licentiouſneſs, become ſo extremely common, and even ſhameleſs among thoſe we are ſpeaking of, that, we are told, bets are often laid about who will be the next to obtain a divorce? Is not whoredom ſo openly and avowedly indulged in, that, 'tis ſaid, people in the faſhionable world are obliged to have a harlot in keeping, (you will excuſe the unfaſhionable word, however obſolete), if it were but for the reputation of the thing, and to avoid the banter of their companions? What wonder? when luſtful intrigues, embelliſhed with wit and pleaſantry, are their common and habitual entertainment in the dear playhouſe; where, as well as in other places of public diverſion, they muſt mix in company with the fine ladies juſt mentioned, (to uſe for once the ſtyle of the world), in the richeſt ornaments indeed, not inferior to thoſe of ducheſſes. All this too in a country called Chriſtian!

I hope no body will imagine that I mean to charge the Moderator of the late Aſſembly with approving, or directly promoting the licentiouſneſs of the times, or even with perceiving the influence of the public diverſions which he countenanced, upon the corruption of manners. And yet it is certain, that the doing ſo much honour to one who had ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed himſelf in favour of the one, did indirectly at leaſt contribute to promote the other. It has a manifeſt tendency to keep the licentious in countenance, and to give ſome credit to a life of diſſipation, even among ſuch as have not yet given up all pretenſions to ſobriety and virtue. And therefore it is no wonder, that it was ſo highly acceptable to people of that character; while it grieved the hearts of ſuch as wiſhed well to ſerious practical religion.

It is no ſmall matter to thoſe who are inclined to indulge themſelves in ſenſual enjoyments, and who are perhaps but in the firſt ſteps of corruption, to be able to proceed without any uneaſy ſelf-diſapprobation. There is a natural conſcience in moſt men, the ſecret whiſper of which (if means are not uſed to lay it aſleep) is apt to mix ſome bitter drops in the draughts of carnal pleaſure, and thereby to render them leſs palatable. As for thoſe who are arrived at the groſſer indulgences, their conſciences are by that time uſually ſeared as with a red-hot iron, and are capable of giving them little or no diſturbance. But before matters are brought this length, it will coſt ſomething

to clear the paths that lead to debauchery of the thorns and briers that grow near the entrance, and render them at firſt ſomewhat diſagreeable. And therefore nothing can be more acceptable to thoſe who have gone but a little way therein, than any thing that looks like a rational perſuaſion of their innocence. For this reaſon, they are overjoyed when they get men whoſe character or ſtation gives ſome ſort of ſanction to their opinion, to paſs a judgment of approbation upon ſuch of their actions as are generally condemned, and of the lawfulneſs of which they themſelves perhaps are not without ſome ſuſpicion.

This ſerves to account for the fond reception we ſee ſometimes given, by the moſt ſober and decent of worldly men, to ſuch of the clergy whoſe principles and behaviour are ſuitable to their taſte, while they are barely civil to others of them. If they have no higher end in view than temporal happineſs, it will contribute ſomewhat to their ſelf-ſatisfaction in the purſuit of it, to find the liberties they allow themſelves, approved and eſpouſed by ſuch as have been admitted into the moſt ſacred office, and are in the character of teachers of religion. No wonder to hear them ſometimes running out, rather a little extravagantly, in the praiſes of ſuch clergymen. While the narrow notions (as they are called) of their brethren are imputed to weakneſs, ignorance, and bigotry; we need not be ſurpriſed to hear the good ſenſe, and more extenſive knowledge of the politer clergy, celebrated in the higheſt ſtrains. All this is the natural effect of ſelf-love, where conſcience muſt be lulled aſleep in order to the enjoyment of ſenſual gratifications without diſturbance. Such teachers there have always been, ready to ſay peace, peace, when there was no peace, to ſpeak ſmooth things, and propheſy deceits to them who love to have it ſo. And ſuch lovers of deceit there have always been to encourage teachers of that ſort. But ſo bold a ſtroke as that of the 24th of May laſt ſeems to have been reſerved for the preſent age. A ſucceſsful attempt to procure countenance to ſo corrupt a ſtage as ours, and every public one muſt be, from the General Aſſembly of the church of Scotland, would, at any other time, have been conſidered as a bold ſtroke indeed! And what greater countenance could they give to a diverſion that muſt be ſuited to the taſte of ſuch an audience as I have given ſome account of, than ſetting the champion of the ſtage in their Moderator's chair?

I believe many who gave him their votes, did not conſider the matter in this light. The pretence whereby they were impoſed upon, was the ſucceſs he was ſaid to have had in a commiſſion he was inveſted with, to ſolicit for the miniſters of this church a freedom from the window-tax, for which the honour of the

Moderator's

Moderator's chair was repreſented as but a compliment of gratitude. For my part, I look upon both as contrived with the ſame view; the intruſting him with ſuch a commiſſion, as a ſtep to the honour that followed; and both to give a luſtre to a character that had been tarniſhed. As for his ſucceſs in the firſt, ſo much boaſted of by his friends, (which was no more than obtaining a temporary connivance), I impute it rather to the diſpoſition of his Majeſty's miniſters, than to the addreſs of our commiſſioner. Poſſibly, a clergyman of ſeverer morals would not have been ſo acceptable at a court, where the virtuous example of a King is ſaid to have ſo little effect. If there be any honour in this, it is not every one that would chuſe to diſpute it with him: nor is it of ſuch a kind as to be a proper recommendation to miniſters of the goſpel of Chriſt. But this I am ſure of, an inclination to eaſe us of the window-tax (who were included at the firſt perhaps rather through inadvertence than deſign) is no new thing among the miniſters of ſtate, nor peculiar to the preſent adminiſtration. Some years ago (as is well known) the then miniſtry employed a noted lawyer, who was at that time a member of parliament, to prepare a bill, which would have been an effectual and legal protection againſt all future demands. But before the next ſeſſion, when it was intended to be paſſed into a law, ſome objections occurred, that made them chuſe rather to grant it by way of connivance. However, allowing this argument all its weight, what does it amount to, but that our temporal intereſt is preferable to the intereſt of religion, and the ſalvation of ſouls? And conſequently, may we not infer, that, in the choice of a Moderator, the worldly ſpirit prevailed in the General Aſſembly?

I have not ſo much as made it a queſtion, whether it tends to promote religion, or the corruption of manners, and the lamentable diſſipation which now reigns among people in the higher ranks of life, for the General Aſſembly of this church to encourage a public ſtage, by conferring the greateſt honour they had to beſtow upon the greateſt friend of it they had among them. As I take this to be only a queſtion between the church and the world, I conſider the late choice of a Moderator, as an evidence how far the one is gaining ground upon (I wiſh I could not ſay in) the other. As for the men of the world, I could almoſt give up the ſtage to them, provided they did renounce all alliance with, or concern in the church of Chriſt. It has often been uſed as an argument for the ſtage by its defenders, that their time was better ſpent in the playhouſe, than in drinking, gaming, or whoring. This I ſhall readily yield. And if the haunters of playhouſes have no other choice, nor know of any uſe of their time, but to kill it by ſome means or other,

let

let them enjoy this, as the leaſt pernicious one of any that have been mentioned. But one would think a miniſter of the goſpel could be at no loſs to ſuggeſt a better way of diſpoſing of time, that precious treaſure, which it ſeems to be the very buſineſs of the great world how to get rid of.

Indeed there are ſeveral, and perhaps our Moderator among others, who carry the matter farther, and inſiſt on the playhouſe as a ſchool of virtue. Comedy, they tell us, is an uſeful mean of reformation, by laughing people out of their follies. If fornication and adultery (the great ſubjects of our comedies) are allowed to be among theſe follies, I am afraid there are more people laughed into them, than laughed out of them. Of whatever kind theſe follies are, if they are ſuch as, among Chriſtians, are called ſins; and if the reformation brought about in the playhouſe is thought to be connected with the ſalvation of the ſoul; I muſt ſay, that laughing is a very new ſort of repentance, to be recommended by clergymen. It gives me no ſmall concern to hear men of this character ſpeaking ſuch language; becauſe it looks too like their being unacquainted with the pangs of the new birth. Whatever reformation may be brought about by laughing and diverſion, it will be found ſooner or later, that it is only *ſorrowing after a godly manner that worketh repentance to ſalvation, not to be repented of.*

As for tragedy; if there is any moral virtue taught thereby, it is not Chriſtian morality, though it may be agreeable to the ideas of it that, I confeſs, ſome clergymen have entertained. Theſe moraliſts place virtue in the kind of affections that chiefly mark a character; not, as the ſcripture does, in reſtoring to our reaſon the government, which it originally had, over all the inferior appetites and paſſions, in *crucifying the fleſh, with its affections and luſts.* Such a ſober ſort of virtue would prove but a cold entertainment to an audience in the playhouſe. They would be drawn to their gaming and drinking again, did tragedy repreſent only rational creatures with their paſſions ſubdued, and kept within the bounds of moderation. That agitation of their own paſſions which they came for, would be grievouſly diſappointed, if the paſſions repreſented on the ſtage were not allowed to rage, and rave, and madden to ſome purpoſe. Hence it is, that ſelf-murder is ſo common in tragedies, even in the moſt reſpectable characters. I remember once when I had occaſion to take notice of this in the heroine of Douglas, (the tragedy ſo much patroniſed by our late Moderator), a Reverend brother in the company obſerved by way of excuſe, that ſhe was repreſented likewiſe as being, by that time, diſtracted: as if was no fault to let our paſſions run away with us the length of madneſs.

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SECTION III.

A ſecond proof of the charge, from the violent ſettlements ordered by them, which render the preaching of the goſpel uſeleſs, nay hurtful; promote the cauſe of infidelity; put the intereſt of religion in the hands of the rich, where it is ſhewn not to be ſafeſt; encourage Simony; and are contray to the laws of this church.

BUT let us now proceed to ſome other actings of the late Aſſembly, too much, alas! of a piece with the firſt. Moſt of their buſineſs, you know, commonly lies in the final deciſion of cauſes relating to the ſettlement of vacant pariſhes. And indeed to all who have a concern for the intereſt of religion, and the ſucceſs of the goſpel, ſuch cauſes muſt appear of the utmoſt importance. Thoſe who view them in no other light but only as a proviſion of a temporal living for ſo many men, cannot have the ſame impreſſion of the ſpiritual intereſt affected thereby. This, however, ſeems to have been the only light in which they were conſidered by the majority of laſt Aſſembly. For all the cauſes of that kind that came before them, were decided in ſuch a manner as afforded the leaſt proſpect of proving for the edification of the pariſhes reſpectively concerned. Particularly, in the caſe of Glendovan, it appeared, that there was not ſo much as one ſingle perſon reſident in the pariſh who was not engaged in the oppoſition to the preſentee; inſomuch that there was not the ſmalleſt probability of any of them attending upon his miniſtrations, far leſs of their being edified thereby. And this was done in conſequence of a ſettled and avowed plan of deciding all ſuch cauſes in the ſame way; even after the fatal effects thereof have now ſtared us in the face for thirty or forty years. I mean the deſertion of miniſters by the people, to ſuch a degree as have already produced above 120 congregations of diſſenters within the period mentioned. To which may be added the prejudices that rankle the hearts, and obſtruct the edification of many that remain with us.

The apoſtle Paul has aſſured us, that the preaching of the goſpel is the great mean which God is pleaſed to uſe, both for the converſion of ſinners, and for the edification and comfort of ſaints. And therefore all who have any concern for the glory of God, and the ſalvation of mankind, cannot but have it much at heart, that this chief inſtrument of promoting theſe things be put upon the moſt favourable footing. Especially, this

might juſtly be expected to be the main end which every church-judicatory has in view. What elſe can be the meaning of the government of the church being veſted in them, and particularly this moſt important branch of it, fixing the place of the labourers in Chriſt's vineyard, but that they are intruſted with judging where they may be moſt uſeful, and moſt likely to promote the very end for which the office was inſtituted?

What, then, can be thought of the members of a church-court, who, ſitting in judgment upon ſuch cauſes, ſeem to have loſt all ſight of this end? Some may be tempted to go farther, and to imagine, that, by their deciſions, they intend the quite contrary. Indeed it appears by the conſequences, whatever may be the intention, that no meaſures could be more ſucceſsfully planned for rendering a preached goſpel, if not hurtful, at leaſt hateful, uſeleſs, and contemptible. All, however, that I ſhall venture to ſay, is, that the only thing really accompliſhed by ſuch ſettlements, is the providing a preſentee in a liferent-annuity, and giving him a legal title to a ſtipend, manſe, and glebe. But whether he is to be of any uſe to the pariſh where he is to be ſettled, or to any other, that ſeems to be a queſtion, which they who have adopted this plan, ſeem not to have the leaſt degree of concern about.

How can any ſinner be converted; how can any believer be edified, in the pariſh of Glendovan, by Mr Crichton, if he has nothing but bare walls to preach to, and if none of them will ſubmit to be either catechiſed or viſited by him as a miniſter? Of this, we know, there are too many examples already, ſome of them in that neighbourhood. And is there not too much reaſon to think, that the pariſh of Glendovan itſelf will be another? Is it poſſible to imagine, that the reflections of our brethren never do extend to the conſequences of ſuch ſettlements? or that the circumſtances to which pariſhes ſo treated are often reduced, never come acroſs their minds? Where-ever the fault lies, is there none in doing a thing which, we cannot but know, has had, and probably will have ſuch effects? If there ſhould happen to be no meeting-houſes, to which they have freedom to reſort, near ſuch a pariſh, which is the caſe in ſome corners of the country; and if they be not able to erect one for themſelves, which, I believe, is the caſe of Glendovan; will they not be gradually accuſtomed to the want of public worſhip on the Lord's day? and thus be, in a great meaſure, deprived of goſpel-ordinances, the inſtituted means of ſalvation? and tempted to idleneſs, or perhaps what is worſe than idleneſs, on a day ſet apart for ſpiritual exerciſes? I am afraid, that not a few, through the bounds of this church, are gradually running into a ſtate little different from that of Heathens, driven into it by the tyranny

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of church-judicatories. Though the civil government of the nation has made proviſion for furniſhing them with the means of grace at the public expence, yet many even of thoſe who live by the altar, have, it ſeems, no ſcruple to alienate this ſacred fund from the purpoſe to which it was dedicated, and to convert it into ſinecure annuities, of no uſe to the people, for whoſe ſakes only it was originally deſigned.

But ſuppoſe ſome of them, rather than ſpend the Sabbath at home, ſhould ſometimes attend the miniſtrations of one thruſt in upon them by force, (perhaps literally by a military force); with what prejudice may they be ſuppoſed to hear him either preach or pray? God knows, the ſucceſs of the moſt acceptable preacher amongſt us is ſo very inconſiderable, that we ſtand in need of all advantages for promoting it. But what ſucceſs can be expected from the ungrateful labours of one who is looked upon by his audience as an intruder, perhaps as a ſacrilegious thief and robber, who is in poſſeſſion of what he has no ſufficient right to, and who has taken the name of an office, while he knew that the duties of it would not, and could not be performed by him? Who, that wiſhes well to the intereſts of religion, can think with indifference upon the ordinances thereof lying under ſuch diſadvantages?

It is not very ſurpriſing, that thoſe who would ſubſtitute the ſtage in place of the pulpit, and who look upon plays as the proper means of reforming mankind, have ſo little concern for the ſucceſs of a preached goſpel. But how amazing is it, that any who conſider the goſpel of Chriſt as *the power of God unto ſalvation*, as the mean appointed and countenanced by God for this purpoſe, ſhould diſcover the ſame indifference whether it have free courſe, and be preached with advantage, and under favourable circumſtances, or with the moſt violent prejudices againſt it?

If it were to be ſuppoſed, that any of the enemies of Chriſtianity and labourers in the cauſe of infidelity had ſeats in the General Aſſembly, (of which we are not altogether without example, particularly in the caſe of one infidel-writer, the proſecution of whom upon that account, we know, was oppoſed and prevented by the prevailing party); in that caſe, there would be no myſtery at all in ſuch ſort of ſettlements finding advocates in that court. Nothing could be better calculated for promoting their favourite cauſe. *Divide et impera*, is an old maxim. The church in this land is rent in pieces, by meaſures which are all patroniſed by men of that character. And we have our Saviour's word for it, that a houſe divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand. How eaſy a conqueſt for our enemies! Yet they have the addreſs, or rather the impudence, to wheedle us into a perſuaſion,

ſuaſion, that diviſion is a very harmleſs thing, and can do no hurt to any ſociety that is rent aſunder by it. Numerous and powerful, it ſeems, they muſt be, and of no ſmall influence among us, to be able to make us play their game for them, while they look on with pleaſure. They, no doubt, laugh behind the curtain, to ſee us, with our own hands, put the preaching of the goſpel under the moſt diſcouraging and unfavourable circumſtances for its ſucceſs, and to ſee us decide the cauſe of every ſettlement of a miniſter, as if his uſefulneſs in that capacity was of no ſort of moment. It muſt needs highly regale them, to ſee the miniſters of Chriſt, whoſe office is ſo odious to them, rendered quite contemptible among the people. And how can it otherwiſe be, when ſo many are permitted and encouraged to take the overſight of them with no other viſible view but that of filthy lucre, and ſo many employed in promoting and executing the ſettlement of ſuch as do? When once the hopful project that is already ſo far advanced, of making the Chriſtian clergy idle and uſeleſs, yea odious burdens on the public, is once fully accompliſhed; will not this pave the way ſmoothly for aboliſhing the office, and applying the emoluments of it to more acceptable purpoſes? And what can be conceived more agreeable to the baptized infidels among us, whoſe number ſeems to be increaſing every day, with the riches and luxury, the public diverſions and alarming diſſipation of the times?

This naturally ſuggeſts one bad conſequence of the plan for ſettlements which is now ſo openly adopted by our preſent leaders, namely, that it will throw the ſettlement of all our vacancies into the hands of the rich and the great, without the leaſt control even of a church-court, in the moſt clamant caſe. How far this will contribute to the promoting ſerious practical religion, may ſafely be referred to every one that has any real concern about the matter, and that knows any thing of the preſent ſtate of religion among the higher ranks of life.

I know, this very effect of the plan is brought as an argument for it by the moſt zealous of its friends. I am ſorry to ſee them betraying thereby how low the ideas are, which they ſeem to have conceived, of what ſerious practical religion is. They allege, that the more liberal education of the rich and great gives them an advantage over the lower ranks of men, in judging of the qualifications of clergymen: as if a taſte for Shakeſpear did ſufficiently qualify one to be a miniſter of the goſpel of Chriſt. But, raillery apart, they muſt, ſurely, be laughing in their ſleeve, when they pretend to reaſon in this manner. Can they, who have, themſelves, ſo little regard for a miniſter's uſefulneſs, and who think it ſo trifling a circumſtance, as not to be of the leaſt weight in a deciſion about his ſettlement; can they really imagine,

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that any ſuch conſideration comes within the compaſs of a patron's view, when he is cramming a preſentee down the throat of a reluctant pariſh? And 'tis only ſuch preſentees that we object to. But granting that conſiderations of this kind had more influence than they have, I cannot think that our preſent leaders have ſo little knowledge of the world, as to be really of opinion, that the intereſt (not of plays and other pompous entertainments, but) of ſerious religion, and the ſalvation of ſouls, would be ſafeſt in the hands of thoſe that are wallowing in the riches, honours, and pleaſures of this world. Sure I am, the inſpired writers of the holy ſcripture have ſet rich men in a very different light. Any one that doubts of this, may conſult the following paſſages among others: Deut. viii. 12. 13. 14. Job xxi. 13. 14. 15. Prov. xxx. 8. 9. Jer. v. 5. Amos vi. 1.—6. Matth. xiii. 22. & xix. 22.— 24. Luke vi. 24. 25 viii. 14. xii. 19. xvi. 19 & xviii. 23. 1 Cor. i. 26. 1 Tim. vi. 9. James ii. 5.—7.—& v. 1.—5. &c.

I might refer, for an exemplification of theſe paſſages, to that article of our periodical entertainments which is diſtinguiſhed by the title of *Tête-à-têtes*. But as I cannot help thinking the readers rather poiſoned than entertained by ſo many ſcandalous recitals, I ſhall only tranſcribe from a late publication one paſſage, where a lady of faſhion is repreſented tutoring her daughter in the following terms. "The religion and morality (I "join them together, becauſe they are equally to be diſre-"garded by every body who would figure in the firſt rank "of life) contained in our Bibles and Prayer-books, are well "enough calculated to prevent the common people from put-"ting themſelves on a footing with their ſuperiors," &c. I ſuppoſe you have enough of it. You would not have had ſo much had I the direction of the Edinburgh Weekly Amuſement. All that I mean by this little extract, (whatever may be in the aſſurances we have of the genuineneſs of a long letter all to the ſame purpoſe), is only to ſhew what is the ſenſe of the preſent ſtate of religion in the great world, that obtains among thoſe who have better opportunities to know it than I pretend to.

Poſſibly, all this (however well ſupported by the ſcripture-account of things) may appear to the polite gentlemen, whether clergy or laity, and may be accuſed by them, as uncharitableneſs. But, upon this occaſion, I cannot help accuſing them of having quite altered the meaning of this word from the ſcripture-ſenſe of it. Charity is the very ſubſtance of practical religion; and therefore it is of the utmoſt importance to have clear and diſtinct ideas of what is meant thereby. In the ſcripture, the obvious ſenſe of this word, diſtinguiſhed, as it ſometimes is, from brotherly love, is a deep and univerſal concern for the happineſs of all mankind, eſpecially their greateſt and trueſt, *i. e.* their everlaſting happineſs,

happineſs, and a doing all we can to promote it. But is not the word frequently uſed in a ſenſe that is inconſiſtent with this, and, in ſo far as it is current, has a tendency to diſappoint this benevolent deſign? Does it not often ſtand for a perſuaſion, that impenitent ſinners are already in ſo fair a way that there is no neceſſity of any change in their lives? and conſequently, when thus uſed, does it not imply an endeavour to root out of their minds any apprehenſion of the bad conſequences of their habitual indulgence of their ſenſual appetites, and of their immerſion in carnal pleaſures? And will not this be an encouragement to them, to perſiſt in a way that muſt prove ruinous and deſtructive to them at laſt? Jeremiah had to do with juſt ſuch a ſet of clergy in his time, of whom he complains, chap. xxiii that *they ſtrengthened the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedneſs.——They ſay ſtill unto them that deſpiſe me, The Lord hath ſaid, Ye ſhall have peace; and they ſay unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil ſhall come upon you.——But if they had ſtood in my counſel, and had cauſed my people to hear my words, then they ſhould have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.* I acknowledge, that a truly-charitable man will neither ſuſpect his neighbours without ground, nor, even when his ſuſpicious are well founded, will ſpeak of them without neceſſity. But what Chriſtian will pretend to ſay, (after peruſing the paſſages of ſcripture above quoted, not to make any other appeal), that a jealouſy of the rich is without any ground, or that there is no neceſſity for mentioning it, when the moſt important branch of the government of this church is propoſed to be ſurrendered into their hands, by the courts of Chriſt's inſtitution, to whom it is ſecured, not only by the conſtitution of the Chriſtian church, but even by the civil laws of our country, as far as it is in the power of words?

Among all the motives whereby patrons are uſually influenced in granting preſentations, there is one which (as we cannot but foreſee) is truly alarming in the higheſt degree. And that is, the ſtipulation of an adequate price, or what is uſually called a Simoniacal paction. Of this we have had ſome inſtances already, which have drawn from former Aſſemblies acts and regulations for preventing it. But it is certain, that the only effectual method of guarding againſt it, would be the continuance of ſome check upon the power of patrons in church-judicatories. As ſoon as all oppoſition is quite over, and a preſentation is become as abſolute in its operation, as the friends of that plan contend it ſhould be; there cannot be the leaſt doubt, that it will be bought and ſold as openly among us as it is now in England. The ſame cauſes muſt always produce the ſame effects. While a preſentation without a call is diſputed in

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the eccleſiaſtical courts, where the church-laws muſt be broken before it can have any effect, and where it is liable to be, and ſometimes is finally rejected, without any reſource to the preſentee; it is not ſo very ſaleable a commodity. Even theſe circumſtances, we ſee, do not altogether prevent it. But if a preſentation was once become as ſure a title to a pariſh, as the King's commiſſion is to a pair of colours in the army; if that ſecured as indiſputable and eaſy a poſſeſſion of the ſtipend as this does of the pay; the one, to be ſure, will be juſt as commonly ſold as the other.

As for any acts the Aſſembly can make to ſtop the progreſs of this evil; did you ever ſee a man pretend to ſcrape as much ſand together on the ſea-ſhore with his foot, as to be a ſufficient bulwark againſt the tide when it was flowing? In the ſame light do all theſe acts, that have been, or can be made, appear to me. Experience ſhews, that they always have been, and undoubtedly will be eluded. And for the Aſſembly to adopt a plan which will make preſentations a ſealeable commodity, while they amuſe themſelves and others with acts againſt Simony, is as if one ſhould open a window againſt which a hurricane was blowing, and, at the ſame time, pretend to ſhelter himſelf from its violence with a few feathers. I cannot be perſuaded, that our preſent leaders are ſuch ſimpletons, as not to be ſenſible of theſe things. Perhaps it is not yet time to diſcover the ſame indifference about Simony, as they have ventured to do about the edification of the people, and the uſefulneſs of miniſters. And therefore they may think it proper to amuſe their followers and others, with ineffectual acts againſt it, the execution of which is in their own hands, while they are taking ſteps whereby its approach is made ſure and certain. If I ſaw them as ready to execute ſuch acts as to make them, I would be more confident of their being in earneſt. But if the too early appearance of Simony in any high degree would hurt their credit or influence, they, ſurely, are obliged to thoſe who ſtill continue ſome oppoſition to bare unſupported preſentations, the only thing whereby that appearance is retarded.

Many other diſagreeable conſequences of violent ſettlements might be noticed, ſuch as, turning the whole form of ordination or admiſſion, and the ſolemn worſhip of God upon ſuch occaſions, into a ludicrous farce, and expoſing it to juſt ridicule, and even indignation; impairing, if not ruining the credit and uſefulneſs of thoſe miniſters who are employed in the execution of ſuch deciſions; grieving the hearts of the beſt of our people, and tempting the worſt of them to vent their paſſion and reſentment in ways that often prove a ſcandal and reproach upon the religion they profeſs. But as this whole matter is largely and ſolid-

ly handled in a book lately publiſhed, entitled, *Tracts concerning patronage*, &c. I ſhall only mention one objection more againſt the deciſions of laſt Aſſembly in the ſettlement of vacancies. And that is, their direct contrariety to the ſtanding laws and conſtitutions of this church, as recapitulated and enforced in the 14th act of Aſſembly 1736.

This is ſo notorious and undeniable, that, I own, I have no ſmall curioſity to know how the prevailing party can pretend to account for the conſiſtency of their conduct. But my hopes of a gratification are very ſmall. Their obſtinate ſilence upon this head (for this is not the firſt time they have been called upon to do it) looks as if no importunity could draw from them any explanation. According to their own doctrine *, if they diſapprove the laws of this church, ſo as that they cannot or will not obey them, they ſhould no longer continue members of it. And yet they ſtill ſit as members of her courts, to give deciſions in the moſt expreſs contradiction to her ſtanding laws. This inconſiſtent conduct, evidently, overthrows our conſtitution from the very foundations. Any government, worth the contending for, muſt be a government of laws, not of men. If it be not ſo, there is no conſtitution at all, but an arbitrary tyranny. It is obvious at firſt view, that laws in any ſociety are the moſt inſignificant things in the world, if judges, in the deciſion of particular cauſes, are not limited by them. So careful has our church been of this, that members of Aſſembly eſpecially (who ſit there by commiſſion) are expreſsly tied down in their very commiſſions, "to vote and determine in all matters "that come before them agreeable to the conſtitutions of this "church." Whoever cannot produce a commiſſion with this clauſe in it, is excluded from a ſeat in that court. So that the ſettlements of Glendovan, &c. were really determined, at the laſt Aſſembly, *a non habentibus poteſtatem*. The power veſted in the members who voted for them, did not reach ſo far as they illegally extended it, when they voted and determined in a way that was expreſsly prohibited by the ſtanding conſtitutions of this church.

SECTION IV.

The plea for violent ſettlements from the act 10*mo* *Annæ* ſhewn to be inſufficient, even though their own interpretation of that act was to be admitted. That, however, it is not the law, but their own

* See the Reaſons of Diſſent from the Commiſſion in March 1752.

inclination

inclination that leads them to ſuch meaſures, ſhewn from their rejecting the advantages afforded by the act 1719, and repelling every legal objection to preſentations unſupported by a call.

BUT how little ſoever they have to plead from the laws of the church, they think they have a great deal to plead from the law of the land. It is alleged, that the act of parliament reſtoring patronage requires the church-judicatories, abſolutely to ſettle a preſentee, without leaving to them any judgment on the affair; that if they make any inquiry into the inclinations of a pariſh, it is entirely *ex gratia*; and let it turn out how it will, they are obliged not to pay the leaſt regard thereto. This is the grand argument, which is thought ſufficient to ſtop the mouth of every objector, and therefore deſerves a particular conſideration. Now, to this my reply is twofold. Firſt, that even if it were as they allege, it would be no ſufficient vindication of their conduct. But, ſecondly, that it is not ſo, and that the act of the 10th of Queen Anne is very unjuſtly, and without ſufficient ground, pled upon this occaſion.

The firſt of theſe I mention, not that we have any occaſion for it, as ſhall preſently be ſhewn; but in order to convict the leaders in our church of the worldly ſpirit that prevails in their adminiſtration. The argument (if I miſtake not, and it would give me pleaſure to be told by themſelves that it is a miſtake) is pled ſo high on their ſide, as it, admitting all the bad conſequences that can be alleged, they are to be conſidered as light, when put in the oppoſite ſcale againſt an act of parliament. On the other hand, I inſiſt, that, by divine authority, we are forbidden to deſtroy religion with our own hands, eſpecially when met in Chriſt's name to order the affairs of his houſe. And if we ſhould be required to do ſo by the authority of an act of parliament, this is only an human authority, and of no weight at all in oppoſition to the authority of God. So that if the violent ſettlements that are ordered almoſt every year by the General Aſſembly, be, really, ſo ruinous and deſtructive to the intereſt of religion among us, as has been ſhewn; it is certain that no authority upon earth can bear them out in ſuch a courſe of proceeding. This is a truth which every good man muſt immediately feel at the bottom of his heart. The very buſineſs of every church judicatory, and the deſign of its inſtitution, is, to promote, not to obſtruct the edification of Chriſtians. This is injoined upon us by ſo high an authority, that where-ever there is a due regard for it, every other authority in oppoſition to it muſt go for nothing. And as this is likewiſe injoined, par-

ticularly with reſpect to planting vacant churches, by the higheſt authority in this church, the members of it whom we are ſpeaking of, by their own principles, are bound to give up their ſtations therein, if they think themſelves obliged by a higher authority to diſobey its laws.

Never was there a more loyal people than the French Proteſtants, while they enjoyed the public exerciſe of their religion. As their national ſynods were countenanced by the preſence of a commiſſioner from the King, who contributed a conſiderable ſum to bear their charges, they gave moſt remarkable examples of ſubmiſſion and obedience to him. But it happened, that among other commands laid upon them, which, though very hard, they paid the moſt profound regard to, they were injoined "not to mention the word *Antichriſt* when as they ſpeak "of the Pope, nor to ſtyle the Catholics *idolaters*, nor to treat "the Catholic religion with any ſcandalous or injurious terms, "ſuch as the *abuſe* and *deceits of Satan*, and other ſuch like, "which are to be found in your confeſſion of faith." This ſenſibly affected the intereſt of their religion: and then ſee how firmly and boldly they reply, as we have it in the acts of the ſynod of Loudun 1659. "But as for thoſe words, *Antichriſt* in "our liturgy, and *idolatry* and *deceits of Satan*, which are "found in our confeſſion, they be words declaring the grounds "and reaſons of our ſeparation from the Romiſh church, and "doctrines which our fathers maintained in the worſt of times, "and which we are fully reſolved as they, through the aids of "divine grace, never to abandon, but to keep faithfully and inviolably to the laſt gaſp."

There cannot be a clearer evidence of the worldly ſpirit that prevails in our church-rulers, than their inſenſibility of this great and certain truth, that ſin ought not to be committed in obedience to any creature. If they tell us on the one hand, "It is to "no purpoſe to inquire what the conſequences may be of ſettling "every pariſh upon a bare preſentation; for let the conſequences be what they will, the law requires it, and therefore "it muſt be done:" I think it ſufficient to reply, on the other hand, "Such an inquiry is indiſpenſably neceſſary, becauſe if "that meaſure is found to be deſtructive of true religion, no "authority upon earth, civil or eccleſiaſtic, can oblige to it." Let me only aſk, if a church was commanded in general terms, by the civil government of the country, not very kindly affectioned to it, "to ſee that their vacancies be ſettled contrary to "their own eccleſiaſtical conſtitutions, in ſuch a way as to render miniſters uſeleſs and odious, to obſtruct the edification "of the people, and to pave the way for Simoniacal practices," whether they would maintain the binding obligation of ſuch a law,

a law, and contend for a punctual obedience to it? And pray, where is the difference between ſuch a law, and the enacting of a thing which we know and ſee to be attended with theſe very conſequences? What article of our religion would not be readily abandoned by thoſe who avow it as their eſtabliſhed maxim, *willingly to walk after the commandment?* Hoſ. v. 11.

But however certain and obvious all this may be to true Chriſtians, it is, by no means, the only anſwer which the above argument is capable of. We have reaſon to bleſs God, that the act 10*mo Annæ*, though made by our enemies with a view to diſtreſs us, is not at all ſo ſtraitening as many among us pretend, and ſeem to wiſh it were. It is, in itſelf, a blunt and harmleſs weapon, in compariſon with the keen edge put upon it by a majority in our late Aſſemblies. This, I own, is an accuſation that needs to be well ſupported. And therefore I ſhall make it evident, that the law, as it ſtands, lays us under no obligation to commit the violence upon vacant pariſhes that has been ſo often and ſo juſtly complained of; but that it is entirely owing to the choice and inclinations of the actors, who lay hold upon the law for a pretence, without ſufficient ground. Every body muſt be ſenſible of this, who will reflect upon the following conſiderations.

If it was only the authority of parliament that led them into ſuch meaſures, and if they had any true and real concern for the edification of the people, and the ſucceſs of the goſpel; undoubtedly they would accept of any relaxation of the rigour of the law that is offered by the ſame authority of parliament. This very trial of their ſincerity has been actually made. But what effect has it had? Has it contributed, in the leaſt degree, to ſoften the rigour of ſo hard a law in the execution? Let us conſider the matter a little, and ſee what reception ſo kind an interpoſition in our favour has met with.

In the year 1719, a king and parliament more favourable to our intereſt, ſenſible of the hardſhip put upon us by a Tory parliament and court, made an act for removing, in ſome meaſure, that grievance, whereby the rigour of the act 1712 is conſiderably mitigated. It was thought by our friends at that time, that it would have delivered us from the effects of patronage that were moſt to be dreaded. And indeed, if there was a diſpoſition to take the advantage given us, it would yet do ſo. Two things were then enacted, that might have contributed much to this purpoſe.

The firſt is, That all preſentations given to miniſters already ſettled in another pariſh, ſhould be null and void. The words are, "Be it enacted by the authority aforeſaid, That if any patron ſhall "preſent any perſon to a vacant church, from and after the firſt

" day of June 1719, who ſhall not be qualified by taking and ſub-
" ſcribing the ſaid oath in manner aforeſaid; or ſhall preſent a
" perſon to any vacancy, who is then, or ſhall be paſtor or mini-
" ſter of any other church or pariſh; or any perſon who ſhall
" not accept, or declare his willingneſs to accept of the preſen-
" tation and charge to which he is preſented, within the ſaid
" time; ſuch preſentation ſhall not be accounted any interrup-
" tion of the courſe of time allowed to the patrons for preſent-
" ing: but the *jus devolutum* ſhall take place, as if no ſuch pre-
" ſentation had been offered, any law or cuſtom to the contrary
" notwithſtanding."

I will not proſtitute the reaſoning faculty ſo far as to enter into any formal proof, that by "a perſon who is or ſhall be paſtor or miniſter of any other church or pariſh," the parliament meant any miniſter already ſettled in another pariſh. For my part, I really find myſelf at a loſs, upon trial, for other words whereby to expreſs the thing more clearly and plainly than the parliament has done. Nor will I pretend to prove that two different clauſes are not one and the ſame. If this be thought neceſſary, it is already done in the above-mentioned *Tracts on patronage*, *p.* 143. To which I ſhall only add, that if miniſters already ſettled (who are capable indeed of tranſportation by a call, without which it cannot be expedient to tranſport them, if they) were not intended to be excluded from preſentations, the ſecond of the three enacting clauſes above recited, is altogether ſuperfluous, and to no manner of purpoſe whatſoever. If the intention was only to make an acceptance neceſſary to the validity of a preſentation, this was ſufficiently ſecured by the third clauſe, indeed every whit as well without as with the ſecond clauſe. The terms are univerſal, "any perſon who ſhall "not accept;" and conſequently would have included miniſters, without any particular mention of them more than others. But really, if there are any who are not ſatisfied with the bare recital of the parliament's own words, I take it to be as ſuperfluous, and to as little purpoſe to reaſon with them, as the ſecond of the three clauſes in the act would be upon their hypotheſis. It is plain, that no words can poſſibly be contrived which they might not equally elude. No man is ſo hard to be convinced as thoſe who are unwilling to be ſo.

Now, what effect has this favourable interpoſition of the legiſlature had among us? When they would have eaſed us of at leaſt a part of the burden of patronage, have we not voluntarily taken it up again, and impoſed it unneceſſarily upon ourſelves? Is not Mr Thomſon miniſter of Gargunnock? and yet has not the Aſſembly appointed the Preſbytery of Stirling to ſettle him at St Ninian's, a reluctant and reclaiming pariſh, by mere dint

of

of a preſentation? —How ſhameful to add, as they do? "accor-
"ding to the rules of the church," which expreſsly prohibit the *intruding any miniſter contrary to the will of the congregation.* What then can it be leſs than the higheſt degree of affectation, to pretend that it is the law of the land which obliges them thus to trample upon the law of the church?

This, however, frees us only from a part of the burden. But there is another clauſe in that act, which, had it been properly improved, would have made the remaining part very eaſy. And indeed it was thought at that time, that the church had now the whole matter in their own management. What I mean, is the making an acceptance eſſential to the validity of a preſentation. Every body knew how entirely probationers are ſubject to the church-judicatories, and obliged to obſerve their regulations. If the church had preſerved its authority over them, and a due regard for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, and the edification of the people; none durſt have accepted a preſentation, when it was likely to have no other effect but to give them a right to a ſtipend. Accordingly the letters of acceptance, for a great many years after that act was paſſed, were conceived in very cautious terms. They commonly contained an acknowledgment of the neceſſity of a call from the pariſh, in order to found a paſtoral relation; upon which condition only the preſentation was accepted. At length, one bolder than the reſt gave an abſolute acceptance; upon which he was deprived of his licence. Had this ſentence been affirmed by the General Aſſembly to which he appealed, it would have ſaved us the trouble of many ſcandalous affairs, and many offenſive and hurtful deciſions.

Another manifeſt proof that it is not the law which obliges, but the inclinations of a prevailing party that lead them to commit the violences complained of, is, that all the advantages which the law itſelf affords us to get rid of a bare unſupported preſentation, are, by them, conſtantly and obſtinately rejected, and upon every occaſion pled in vain. I ſhall mention ſome of them.

The law expreſsly excludes all Papiſts, and all who do not qualify to the government, from preſenting. Yet they are ſuffered to elude this ſalutary law. The preſentations of others, to whom they aſſign the right for that vice, are conſtantly ſuſtained, tho' directly contrary to the ſpirit and deſign of the law.

Again, the law enacts, That, if a patron neglects to preſent for ſix months after a vacancy, the *jus devolutum* falls into the hands of the preſbytery. Now, it is certain, that as ſoon as ever a miniſter's relation to a pariſh is looſed, whether by death, tranſportation, demiſſion, or depoſition, there is a vacancy in that pariſh. In the primitive church, vacancies were frequently filled in leſs than ſix days. Surely ſix months is time ſufficient

ent to all intents and purpoſes, for taking the firſt ſteps to that end. Yet patrons (whoſe intereſt it is to protract a vacancy, having a right to diſpoſe of the vacant ſtipend) frequently do tranſgreſs even theſe wide limits, to which they are confined by the law, truſting to the experienced indulgence of our preſent church-rulers, and are never, I believe, diſappointed.

Various and groundleſs are the pretences alleged upon ſuch occaſions. Sometimes the vacancy is dated, not from the death of the former incumbent, when the pariſh, undoubtedly, became vacant; but from the declaration of the vacancy in the pariſh-church, perhaps ſome weeks after the vacancy did really happen. This ſeems to me to be one of the moſt idle and uſeleſs ceremonies in the world, after a miniſter's death and burial has ſufficiently declared a vacancy, beyond the reach of any man's voice in a pulpit. Yet ſome preſbyteries have a cuſtom of appointing it even in that caſe, without any law for it, either of church or ſtate; and for no reaſon that I can perceive, if it be not to furniſh a pretence for protracting a vacancy, that is long enough at any rate. Sometimes it is dated, in caſe of a tranſportation, not from the time when the miniſter's relation was looſed from the pariſh thereby vacated, but from the time of his admiſſion to the new charge. And yet I have known the interval ſo long, that the tranſported miniſter had no right to any ſtipend for one half-year, either in the one pariſh or the other. Surely the patron of the firſt would find a vacancy before the admiſſion took place, when it brought half a year's ſtipend into his diſpoſal. Sometimes it is pretended, that there muſt be time allowed for the vacancy to come to the patron's knowledge, before the ſix months begin to run, though one would think that ſix months is time enough for every purpoſe. And for this pretence recourſe is had, not to the act 1712, the law we are now under, but, in an obvious inconſiſtency with the plain meaning of the words thereof, to an obſolete one above two hundred years old, conceived in terms that are evidently vague and uncertain. But after all it is a notorious fact, that even when a ſettlement appears to be moſt uncomfortable and violent, every pretence or excuſe on the part of a patron, though manifeſtly illegal, is always admitted, and all objections, how well ſoever founded in law, are uniformly and conſtantly repelled by the prevailing party, as far as their power and influence extends. Every one of theſe objections lay againſt the preſentation to St Ninian's. And yet, how uncomfortable ſoever it appears to be, not one of them, not all of them together, were allowed to have any weight, even though the preſentee was, by the act 1719, rendered incapable of a preſentation.

SEC.

SECTION V.

The interpretation uſually put upon the act reſtoring patronage, ſhewn to be a falſe one; and that church-courts are thereby impowered to decide finally in all differences between patron and pariſh, proved from the act itſelf, compared with the act 1690, to which it refers.

BUT the moſt ſtriking proof of the unjuſt prejudice that our brethren have in favour of violent ſettlements, and againſt conſulting the people's edification, or the ſucceſs of the goſpel therein, is the general interpretation they unneceſſarily put upon the act reſtoring patronage. This convinces me, that it is not the law that obliges them to thwart the inclinations of the people, (a mere affected pretence!), but their own preference of this tyrannical method of proceeding, by choice. They conſtantly repreſent the ſaid act, as if it left no judgment at all to the church in the matter of ſettling vacant pariſhes, but diveſted us of all the powers that were ſo firmly ſecured to us by the treaty of union, and required every preſentee to be ſettled at any rate. This is the light in which they ſeem always to conſider it. And it is this interpretation alone that can give any plauſible colour to their own conduct. Now let us conſult the act itſelf, and ſee whether this ſenſe can be fairly put upon it.

The law we were under from the revolution to the 10th of Queen Anne, was the act 1690. How far was that act repealed by the Britiſh parliament? Was it totally repealed? By no means. Only "in ſo far as the ſame relates to the *preſentation* "of miniſters by heritors and others therein mentioned." The repeal is plainly and particularly limited to this ſingle clauſe, and all the reſt of that act was left in its full force. An encroachment, indeed, was made upon a privilege that had been poſſeſſed about twenty years by the heritors and elders of vacant pariſhes; but none upon the rights, liberties, or powers of church-judicatories, which, for any thing in this, or any other act of parliament, are ſtill veſted in them by the law of the land, as fully as ever they poſſeſſed them before the paſſing of that act. This is not all: not only are the other clauſes of the act 1690 not repealed, but we are expreſsly and particularly referred to it, for the effect of a preſentation by the patron; which is declared to be preciſely the ſame with that of an election, or, as it is called, *preſentation* by heritors and elders formerly. The words are, "whom the preſbytery is obliged to receive and admit in the

"ſame

" ſame manner as thoſe preſented before the making of THIS " act ought to have been admitted."

A gentleman learned in the law, who was a member of the laſt Aſſembly, did aſſert in the face of that court, that, by the act reſtoring patronages, a preſbytery was obliged to admit a preſentee in the ſame manner as thoſe preſented before the act 1690 ought to have been admitted. And, for ought I know, it might have paſſed uncontradicted, and been received as law, if it had not luckily happened, that another member had a paper in his pocket, with the very words of the law, as inſerted above, tranſcribed in it; which were read. Before the act 1690 a preſentee could have had letters of horning for his admiſſion. I mention this incident, to ſhew how violent the prejudice runs againſt any liberty being left with the church to refuſe a preſentee; that it affects the very imagination, and makes people fancy that the law really is as they would have it. For I verily believe that the gentleman ſpoke as he thought, and that he had no intention to impoſe upon his audience.

Being thus referred to the act 1690 for the effect of a preſentation by patrons, which is the ſame with that of a preſentation formerly by heritors and others therein mentioned; let us next ſee what is there enacted upon this ſubject. Whatever it be, it is plain, that, even without any ſuch particular reference, it would of courſe (being excepted from the repeal) ſtill continue to be the law in this matter. By the act 1690, the preſentee muſt be " propoſed to the whole congregation, to be either approven or " diſapproven by them; and if they diſapprove, that the diſap- " provers give in their reaſons, to the effect the affair may be cog- " noſced upon by the preſbytery of the bounds, at whoſe judg- " ment, and by whoſe determination, the calling and entry of a " particular miniſter is to be ordered and concluded." Now, upon this I muſt beg leave to make a few obſervations; the rather that this is, without all queſtion, the law we are now under.

And in the firſt place, If preſentees are to be received and admitted now in the ſame manner as before making the act 1712, will any man have the front to ſay, that a preſentation alone ſufficiently entitles a preſentee to be taken upon trials by the preſbytery, and that there is no other previous ſtep neceſſary in order to his ſettlement? The zealots for a rigid patronage ſeem to be grown tired of calls. And indeed it is no wonder, after they have made them quite inſignificant. The moderation of a call to a preſentee upon their principles, I own, is extremely abſurd. It is, really, nothing but a ludicrous farce, and can have no other effect but to expoſe the church to ridicule. Accordly they themſelves are ſo ſenſible of this, that they are beginning now to ſpeak of it as a uſeleſs ceremony that may be altogether

gether omitted. How often do we hear them inſinuating, that the moderation of a call after preſentation is illegal, and that ſuch a thing as a call is unknown in the law? All this, however, is owing to their ignorance of the law, or at leaſt their inattention, if not a wilful impoſition upon others. That which miſleads them, is, that it is, indeed, now illegal to give heritors and elders a power to nominate whom they pleaſe for filling the vacancy, after a preſentation is ſuſtained. But to propoſe the perſon already nominated by the patron, to the whole congregation, to be either approved or diſapproved by them, is ſo far from being illegal, that it is the very thing which is (I do not ſay allowed, but) expreſsly injoined by their own favourite act of parliament. What elſe is the moderation of a call to a preſentee, but propoſing him to the congregation to be either approved or diſapproved by them? How can the approvers or diſapprovers be known but by their votes? I might add, if it were of any moment, that not only the thing, but the very term too is adopted by the law: for it is the CALLING and entry of miniſters that the preſbytery is authoriſed to order and conclude. Surely, when they appoint a call to be moderated, it cannot be, as our preſent leaders would have it, to no ſort of purpoſe whatever. On the contrary, they tell us, it is "to the effect the affair may be cognoſced upon by the preſbytery," which is another ſtep required by the law to be taken by the preſbytery before a preſentation can have its full effect. How inconſiſtent do they make the parliament to be, who maintain that they have left the preſbytery nothing to cognoſce upon, and yet require them to cognoſce upon it?

2. Whereas the diſapprovers are required to give in their reaſons, great hold is laid upon this harmleſs clauſe, as if it undid all again. But theſe improvements are nothing but additions to the act of parliament. For neither does the law ſay a ſingle word of what effect theſe reaſons muſt have, which is entirely left to the preſbytery; nor is there the leaſt ſhadow of a limitation to any particular kind of reaſons, as ſome of us would have it. Nay, the preſbytery are not confined to cognoſce only upon the reaſons given; but the whole affair, as it ſtands, in all its circumſtances, is appointed to be the ſubject of their deliberation. The words are, "to the effect *the affair* may be cognoſced upon." It is not merely the reaſons of the diſapprovers, but the whole affair that is referred to the cogniſance of the preſbytery. When once they are arrived at that ſtep, it is then competent to every member to give his opinion, whether he thinks the reaſons good or bad, or whether the ſettlement ſhould be proceeded in, or not. But to allege that no reaſons can be good, if they be not objections to the life or doctrine of

the preſentee, is not only an addition of their own, of which the parliament makes not the leaſt inſinuation, but highly abſurd, and inconſiſtent with the known and eſtabliſhed ſteps of procedure in that matter. For objections of that kind there is another opportunity provided in our forms, (I mean at the return of the edict), where all have an equal acceſs to be heard, whether they be members of the vacant congregation or not: whereas none but pariſhioners have a right to vote for or againſt one that is nominated to be their miniſter; and the reaſons they are to give, are not reaſons why he ought to be cenſured, but reaſons why they diſapprove of his nomination to be miniſter of that pariſh. Can it be imagined, that, when the parliament enacted that a preſentee ſhould be propoſed to the congregation, they meant ſo idle a thing as to give them juſt what they had before without this clauſe, and no more than what any one had as well as they?

The people of St Ninian's have given their reaſon for diſapproving the nomination of Mr Thomſon to be their miniſter, which I ſhall tranſcribe from their printed caſe. "From a diſ-
"temper that had long affected him, they were ſenſible that his
"voice, which he had found too weak for the ſmall church of
"Gargunnock, and which had formerly obliged him to leave a
"ſmall and eaſy charge he had enjoyed at Amſterdam, entirely
"incapacitated him from being heard in their church, which is
"the largeſt, or from officiating in their pariſh, which is the moſt
"extenſive, in that part of the country, or perhaps in Scotland."
This affected neither his life nor doctrine: yet it might be a good reaſon why they diſapproved of his being tranſported to St Ninian's.

For my part, I will venture to go farther. Suppoſe no other reaſon given, but that there was the higheſt probability of the preſentee's being uſeleſs in that pariſh: let any man, who has a ſerious concern for the ſucceſs of goſpel-ordinances, lay his hand to his heart, and honeſtly ſay, whether there is, really, no weight in it at all? It is to me, I muſt own, ſuch a diſcovery of the character of a candidate for the miniſtry, that in a caſe where I am only called to ſignify any thing like a choice or preference, it would have no ſmall weight in determining me. I take it to be one of the moſt eſſential qualifications of a goſpel-miniſter, to have at heart the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, and the edification of his hearers. And therefore, when I ſee one wholly deſtitute of this qualification, by his obſtinately inſiſting on a preſentation, when there is as little proſpect of uſefulneſs as in the caſes, for example, of Glendovan, Shotts, Biggar, &c. I frankly confeſs, were I a member of a vacant pariſh, I would, for that ſingle reaſon, be one of the diſapprovers of

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ſuch a preſentee. How then can I judge ſuch a reaſon, though ſingle, of no weight, when given by others?

3. But the moſt important obſervation I have to make upon the unrepealed part of the act 1690, ſo expreſsly adopted by the Britiſh parliament, is, that it evidently confers upon the judicatories of this church a power of finally deciding in all queſtions between the patron and pariſh; and ſo gives them a negative upon every preſentee that is diſapproved by the people. It is pretty ſingular for courts to diſclaim their own powers, and decline the exerciſe of a juriſdiction that is manifeſtly conveyed to them. And yet this is a power which our church-courts are veſted with by law, in the cleareſt terms. It is impoſſible to conceive words more plain and expreſs to the purpoſe. The preſentee muſt be propoſed to the congregation. If they diſapprove, the affair muſt be cognoſced upon by the preſbytery, *at whoſe judgment, and by whoſe determination, the calling and entry of a particular miniſter is to be ordered and* [*N. B.*] *concluded.* The referring an affair to a court to be cognoſced upon by them, neceſſarily implies, in the very nature of the thing, a liberty of determining either way. For to what purpoſe can they cognoſce upon it, if they are limited to one certain determination? So that, though nothing more had been ſaid, this very reference implies a power and liberty of determination. But, to remove all ſhadow or pretence of ambiguity, it is added, in the cleareſt and plaineſt terms, which cannot admit of a diſpute, that, at their judgment and by their determination, the affair is to be ordered and concluded. Let me aſk any impartial man, whether he would be equally forward to denude himſelf of a power as plainly conferred upon him, that was of importance to his temporal intereſt, as the Aſſembly uſually is to decline the exerciſe of a power ſo neceſſary to the ſpiritual intereſt and ediſication of our people?

O but, ſay our brethren, there muſt be ſome miſtake here. For this would reduce the patron's power to nothing at all.—Very far from it. Is it no power or privilege to have the nomination of the perſon, while all the reſt of the pariſh can only approve or diſapprove? This was all the power that heritors and elders had formerly. And if patrons would condeſcend to aſk, and be at any pains to procure a concurrence, they would very rarely meet with any oppoſition. I have long been a member of a preſbytery, where I never yet ſaw an undoubted preſentee oppoſed by the pariſh. Be this, however, as it will, I would fain aſk theſe brethren, what good reaſon can be aſſigned, for our giving patrons more power than the law has given them? Let the degree of their power be great or ſmall, the queſtion is, Whether it be not all that they have by our law? The Britiſh parliament has

has given them a power which was formerly veſted in the conjunct body of heritors and elders, under the control of the preſbytery. But as ſome of the patrons might be at leaſt as apt to abuſe this power as their predeceſſors were, the ſame parliament has ſtill reſerved to the church-courts a power, in caſe of litigation, to take care of the intereſt of religion in the pariſh, and that the patron's power be not exerciſed in a manner that would be inconſiſtent with the very deſign of the miniſterial office. Why ſhould we give up this power, which was given us for edification, and not for deſtruction? Why ſhould we ſuffer patrons to ruin the intereſt of religion, when the laws of our country have, in order to prevent this, intruſted us with a power of controlling them?

SECTION VI.

The ſame thing proved by other arguments. The general prevailing of a different interpretation (however evidently falſe) accounted for; and the objection from ſome deciſions of the civil judges anſwered.

THAT the church has ſuch a power by the law as it ſtands, is ſo extremely plain and obvious, that it may be thought ſuperfluous to inſiſt any farther upon it. But as there can be no excuſe for ſome ſettlements that have been lately made, unleſs it be this, which is actually alleged, that we have no power to hinder them; I might, over and above the plain words of the law itſelf, adduce a variety of arguments to prove the contrary: ſome of which I ſhall juſt only hint at.

1. It is well known that the law we are now under, has not enacted any penalty for the refuſing to admit or ordain a preſentee. Can we be ſaid to have no power to do that which, by the law, we may do with impunity? In England, where patronage is abſolute, there lies an action againſt the biſhop, upon his refuſing induction to a preſentee. And in Scotland, when it was triumphant, and intended to be ſo, the privy council was impowered to grant letters of horning, if the archbiſhop, to whom complaint was firſt to be made, did alſo refuſe or delay to receive the perſon preſented. Does not the very repealing of all compulſory clauſes ſufficiently indicate the intention of the legiſlature?

2. If the church-judicatories had not a power of finally deciding all differences between the patron and pariſh; would there not lie an appeal from them ſomewhere elſe? If there be no civil court pointed out by the law, with power to give redreſs

dreſs to a patron or preſentee, in caſe of alleged injuſtice, is not this a clear and indiſputable proof, that the church is veſted with a power of final deciſion, even though the law had not expreſsly ſaid ſo?

3. Though the Britiſh parliament thought themſelves at liberty to take a privilege from heritors and elders, who are no church-judicatory, and make no part of our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution; can it be imagined, that, in four or five years after the union, they would commit ſo groſs and ſo flagrant a breach of that ſolemn treaty, as to deprive the church-judicatories of any part of that juriſdiction which had been ſo lately and ſo firmly ſecured to them in perpetuity, "without any alteration "thereof or derogation thereto in any ſort whatſoever," and that "as a fundamental and eſſential condition of that treaty?" Whatever bad impreſſions we may have of the Tory miniſtry at that time, there were, ſurely, men amongſt them that had more regard at leaſt to external decency, than directly and openly to violate ſtipulations that had been ſo recently agreed to by the parliaments of both nations, in ſuch ſtrong and binding terms. And why are they unjuſtly and uncharitably accuſed of ſo ſcandalous a breach of faith, without the leaſt ground or evidence?

4. I ſhall only add, that the practice of the church, ever ſince the 10th of Queen Anne, is a ſufficient commentary upon the act paſſed at that time, and aſcertains the ſenſe of it beyond contradiction. The uſage, which is juſt ſubſequent to the enactment of any ſtatute, hath been always thought a ſure key to its true purpoſe and interpretation. Now, what is the uſage that was immediately ſubſequent to the act reſtoring patronages, and that has continued ever ſince? Are not the ſteps pointed out by the parliament, according to the above interpretation, the very ſteps that have been conſtantly and uniformly taken ſince that act was paſſed? As ſoon as a preſentation is ſuſtained, does not every preſbytery appoint the preſentee to preach in the vacant pariſh, and then moderate in a call; not at large, but limited to the preſentee? That is, he is propoſed to the whole congregation, to be either approved or diſapproved by them, as the law directs. Do they ever proceed to eſtabliſh a paſtoral relation without firſt trying the inclinations of the people, in the only habile method of a call? Do not the moſt zealous advocates for the preſentee, even the patron himſelf, find themſelves under a neceſſity to pretend always ſome ſort of call, though the pretence ſhould, as it ſometimes does, expoſe them to the higheſt ridicule? Has not the exciſe-officer, in oppoſition to all the other inhabitants, or perhaps a ſervant of the patron, been called the pariſh, in ſupport of ſuch a pretence? When the

pariſh

parish disapprove the nomination, is not the affair always cognosced upon by the church-courts, and finally decided, in several instances, against the presentee? When the commission had actually settled a minister at Auchtermuchty, upon a bare presentation; did not the assembly 1734 reverse the settlement, and that in the face, not only of the King's other servants, but of the then prime minister for Scotland? If the parliament should make an act, prohibiting all inferior courts to hold any meetings or do any business upon Fridays, is it to be thought, that no notice would be taken of these courts still continuing to meet and do business on Fridays, as usual?

Indeed the evidence of our having, by law, sufficient power to prevent the worst consequences of patronage, is so clear, and so strong, that it is a very natural question, how the contrary has been so generally taken for granted? And perhaps this very thing may be considered as an objection against the doctrine I have maintained. But if we were disposed honestly to admit the plain truth of the matter, this would appear to be no great mystery. In short, it is the necessary consequence of a thing which has been, and will be a perpetual bar against our obtaining a repeal of the patronage-act, viz. that the most part of patronages in Scotland are now in the hands of the crown, or rather the servants of the crown. The most eminent of our lawyers, who are constant members of Assembly, have been, are, or expect to be in his Majesty's service, the usual way of rising in their profession. This gives them a very natural bias and inclination to support the cause of patronage. When a bare presentation is (as sometimes happens) all that they have to plead, you may be sure, they will stretch the law to the utmost, and plead it in the highest strain. While they are the immediate servants of the crown, in the case of Royal presentations, their duty seems to lead them to it. Upon these occasions they acquire such a habit of speaking upon the subject, and perhaps thinking too, as it is not easy to lay aside, when they are in a more independent state. And it is easy to conceive what effect the strong and frequent assertions of gentlemen learned in the law may have upon people of a different profession, and who have little occasion to look into acts of parliament.

By the same sort of motives, may some of the most eminent among the clergy be led into the same strain, not only of speaking, but even thinking. Favours received, or expected from the ministers of state, chaplainries, principalities, transportations to a better benefice, or more agreeable situation; have they no influence, think you, upon the minds of men? And their plausible representations of the matter among their friends and acquaintance,

quaintance, perhaps admirers, and of inferior note; can they be ſuppoſed altogether without effect?

Add to all this, that if there are amongſt us who are deſtitute of concern for the intereſt of true practical religion, the hurt which it ſuſtains from violent ſettlements, will make no impreſſion upon their minds. If they have no more of Chriſtianity than the little remnant of it which is retained by the Pelagians and Socinians, and look upon all the reſt of it as nonſenſe; if they are inveterate enemies againſt the leaſt appearance of diſcipline, and love to be ſoothed in licentiouſneſs; if this is the preſent ſtate of religion (not to mention avowed infidels) in the higher ranks of life, and in a lower degree even among ſome of the clergy perhaps; theſe will be all ſwayed by their own views of things, to eſpouſe that method of ſettlements which is moſt favourable to the admiſſion of candidates that come neareſt to their own way of thinking, and leaſt favourable to the admiſſion or encouragement of ſuch as receive the whole of Chriſtianity, and appear to be of avowed enmity to that licentiouſneſs which is gaining ground among us every day. Clergymen or candidates of this character are commonly called weak men by the perſons above deſcribed. And I make no queſtion that they really think ſo: nor do I wonder at it. Such of them as read any, are accuſtomed to ſee their tenets and arguments repreſented only by their adverſaries: for they ſeldom look into a book that has the character of orthodox, notwithſtanding all their boaſts of free inquiry, this word being known to be a term of the higheſt reproach and ridicule among them. Indeed, how ſhould they? when they expect to meet with nothing there but nonſenſe. In the books they do read, the moſt important doctrines of revelation, and the arguments for them, are ſet in ſo abſurd a light, that it is rather a wonder if they allow poor orthodox Chriſtians any degree of rationality at all. Now, all theſe different ſorts of men (not the moſt notorious infidel excepted) concur in ſcrewing up patronage to the higheſt pitch. And as ſeveral of them may be ſuppoſed to have the beſt acceſs to know how the law ſtands, it is not at all ſurpriſing, that their confident aſſertions have been ſuffered to paſs unconradicted; and that many, without the leaſt inquiry into the matter, have taken it entirely upon truſt.

I might alſo obſerve, in order to account for this phænomenon, that they, on the other hand, who began the oppoſition to, and were the moſt zealous againſt violent ſettlements, were wont to ſtate the matter ſo high, that they could not and would not take any advantage of a law which they abſolutely refuſed to ſubmit to. They inſiſted upon an unalienable right in the pariſh, even under a civil eſtabliſhment, not only to approve or diſapprove,

diſapprove, which is all that the law allows, but to chuſe or nominate their paſtor. To them who were of this opinion, it was a matter of indifference what were the particular clauſes of an act reſtoring patronage. They knew it deprived the people of the right they contended for, and which they looked upon to be *jure divino*: and therefore it was not worth their while to conſider what elſe was contained in it. But we who carry the matter no farther than the eſtabliſhed conſtitutions of this church evidently do, whoſe "principle it is and has been, that no miniſter "ſhall be intruded into any pariſh contrary to the will of the "congregation," are at more liberty to notice how the law really ſtands. And after we have ſeen it exemplified in ſo many inſtances, that the breach of this eccleſiaſtical rule is utterly inconſiſtent with the very end of the miniſterial office, it muſt give us no ſmall pleaſure to obſerve, that, by the law of the nation, we are under no neceſſity to act contrary to the law of the church. But the ſtate of matters, both on the ſide of the keeneſt eſpouſers of patronage on the one hand, and of the moſt zealous oppoſers of it on the other, ſufficiently ſerves to account for a falſe interpretation of the law being ſuffered ſo long to paſs current, and almoſt uncontradicted.

From what has been ſaid, you will probably gueſs, that I am none of thoſe who would be very ſanguine in puſhing for an application from the church for a repeal of the patronage-act. Not but that I think it would be a very great favour to this church; and a favour too which, I will venture to ſay, is no leſs than juſtly due to us from the friends of the Hanoverian ſucceſſion, and of the Proteſtant cauſe. But, in the firſt place, it is what we cannot expect to obtain. Where will you find a ſet of miniſters of ſtate, willing to part with ſo much power and influence as that unhappy act has thrown into their hands? nay, I may ſay, that will not ſtruggle even for that *illegal* proportion of it which our own puſillanimity has added to it? eſpecially now that the immenſe ſalaries and perquiſites of thoſe who are employed in the public ſervice, cannot fail to be a temptation, irreſiſtible by worldly men out of place, to ſhake them, if they can, out of their ſeats.

Beſides, I frankly own, that if I were to make a choice, and if the Aſſembly could be truſted, I would prefer the act 10*mo* *Annæ*, with the powers therein given (or rather continued) to the church, to the act 1690 without ſuch powers. The great point with me is, that ſettlements be put on ſuch a footing as to anſwer the great end of edification, and that miniſters may not be ſettled ſo as only to give them a right to the ſtipend, while they are of no uſe to the pariſh in their ſpiritual concerns. This point might, in a great meaſure, be ſecured by the powers we have,

have, were but the General Aſſembly in a diſpoſition to exerciſe them. In compariſon with this, I account it a matter of ſmall moment, in whoſe hands the power or privilege of nominating the perſon lies. I confeſs, there would be leſs hazard, either of a uſeleſs miniſter, or of a Simoniacal paction, if this power had continued as it was fixed by the act 1690. And therefore, if either the one or the other was to be made a ſtanding rule in all caſes whatever, without any power of controlling it, doubtleſs this would be preferable to the other. But I can eaſily figure, nay I have actually known, a caſe, where a ſettlement, by this rule rigidly inſiſted on, would have been as tyrannical, and as little to the edification of the pariſh, as any ever made by a preſentation. In the caſe mentioned, the *jus devolutum* having fallen into the hands of the preſbytery, a call was appointed to be moderated. There were two candidates, one of whom was choſen by a clear majority of the conjunct meeting of heritors and elders. But the majority conſiſting entirely of non-reſiding heritors, there was not a ſingle perſon within the bounds of the vacant pariſh that was not in the oppoſition to him. In the iſſue, both candidates were laid aſide, and the pariſh was harmoniouſly and comfortably ſettled.

Inſtead, therefore, of ſeeking an alteration of the law, which plainly gives us a power to prevent the bad conſequences of patronage, I think it would be of far greater importance, if we could but perſuade the leaders or members of Aſſembly to uſe the power they have for this purpoſe. In my apprehenſion, a great many of us are apt to miſtake the chief ſource of our preſent grievances. Our leaders have had the addreſs to turn our eyes upon the law, that they may be drawn off from themſelves, and to lighten the burden that would otherwiſe fall with greater weight upon their ſhoulders. But it is certain, that, while the preſent diſpoſition continues in thoſe who have the direction of our Aſſemblies, no law whatever could do us any ſervice. You ſee how they can elude and trample upon the laws we have already in our favour, whether civil or eccleſiaſtical. So that, really and truly, it is not the want of law, or the want of power, but the want of inclination to improve it, in a word, the want of due concern for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, and the edification of our people, which is the preſent diſeaſe we labour under; and which, therefore, it ſhould be our chief buſineſs to attempt the cure of. For my own part, my complaints ſhould not be very loud, did they but exerciſe the power they undoubtedly have, in ſome of the moſt flagrant caſes, where there is not the ſmalleſt proſpect of the perſon preſented being of the leaſt uſe, but the contrary; too many of which caſes diſgrace our records.

But to what purpoſe, ſay ſome, when we know that the patron will carry the affair before the court of ſeſſion, the judges in which court may, as in fact they have done, (notwithſtanding the clauſe in the law, that it ſhall be ordered and *concluded* in the eccleſiaſtical court), draw it within their own *vortex*, and impower the patron, in caſe his preſentee be not ſettled, to retain the ſtipend in his own hands: ſo that, if we ſettle another, he will not have the legal encouragement? In reply to this argument, which makes ſo great an impreſſion upon many, I am at no loſs to anſwer, that how great a grievance ſoever this may be, it is by no means comparable to the other, I mean the violent ſettlement of a preſentee by the church. Better a ſtipend be beſtowed upon pious uſes in the pariſh, (which the patron may be compelled to), than to be converted into a ſinecure annuity for a uſeleſs intruder, and ſo prove a temptation to others to be intruders too, for filthy lucre. While a pariſh continues vacant through no fault of the church-courts, but only by the arbitrary oppreſſion of the civil judges, the people will have no prejudice at the eſtabliſhed miniſters, and will have an opportunity of joining in the public worſhip of God, and enjoying goſpel-ordinances, ſometimes in their own pariſh-church, and at other times in neighbouring ones. Whereas, if they ſhould be driven into a ſeparation from the eſtabliſhed church by the tyranny of its government, it may frequently happen, that they may be deprived of the means of grace altogether or in a great meaſure, and ſink by degrees into a ſtate of the groſſeſt ignorance, and neglect or contempt of the worſhip of God, and the means of ſalvation. Where-ever, therefore, there is a due concern for the edification of our people, and for the eternal happineſs of their precious and immortal ſouls, this argument can have very little effect.

At any rate, there is a great difference between a law and a deciſion of an executive court. The firſt, to be ſure, is our rule, but not the other. The law is a ſtanding thing: judges are frequently changing, and the very ſame judge does not always continue of the ſame opinion. How often has the ſame court given contrary deciſions upon the ſame point? But if they ſhould ſtill continue to ſtretch out a long arm, and ſuſtain themſelves judges where the law has made the church-courts the *dernier reſort*: is that a good reaſon why we ſhould immediately ſurrender a privilege that is of the utmoſt importance to the intereſt of religion among us? Suppoſe a Popiſh magiſtrate in the late King James's reign, had decreed a ſevere puniſhment upon a Proteſtant, for refuſing to worſhip the hoſt; will any body preſume to ſay, that the beſt way to prevent the like in time to come, would have been for the Proteſtant clergy of that time, inſtead

inſtead of remonſtrating in the ſtrongeſt terms againſt ſo illegal a judgment, to have ſymbolized with it ſo far as to appoint an eccleſiaſtical cenſure for the ſame offence? For my part, whatever others may think fit, it is a maxim of mine, that if any wrong is to be done which I cannot prevent, it is better to be done without my countenance in any degree, than by my own hands. Thoſe who argue, that, becauſe of one or two deciſions to the prejudice of a privilege we have by the law, which may be very different another time, we ſhould with our own hands deſtroy it to all intents and purpoſes, put me in mind of a certain phyſician, who being called to viſit a patient, ſaid to one of his friends, that it would be doing him a ſervice to knock out his brains; for he was paſt all hopes of recovery, and he would ſuffer a great deal before he died. The patient, however, is ſtill living, after the Doctor has been many years in his grave.

SECTION VII.

A third proof of the charge, from the favour ſhewn to Mr Stewart. The neceſſity of diſcipline, in order to the maintenance of true religion. Some inſtances of the diſcouragement which the exerciſe of it has met with from former Aſſemblies, and the certain conſequences thereof.

IT would be ſome comfort, under the ruinous and deſtructive meaſures of our preſent leaders, if it were poſſible to aſcribe them to any thing elſe but a want of due concern for the ſucceſs of the goſpel. I hope there are not a few of their followers, who are miſled into an error in judgment, by the artful and plauſible reaſonings of ſuch as they are apt to put too implicit a confidence in. But as for thoſe who are in the direction, there is an uniformity in their whole plan, and a conſiſtent tendency in all their meaſures, which, when particular affairs are viewed in a ſeparate and detached light, will not have ſo ſtriking an appearance; but when all are compared together, will not ſuffer us to exerciſe the ſame charity for them. Did they view the ſettlement of miniſters in any other light than merely as a temporal proviſion for the ſubſiſtence of ſo many men in the preſent world, it would be impoſſible for them to be ſatisfied with their own conduct in that matter. And had they any thing like a due concern for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, and the edification of the people, in a word, for the uſefulneſs of miniſters in promoting religion, they would not, ſurely, oppoſe the exerciſe of that diſcipline, which is ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary for this purpoſe. Yet it is an undeniable fact, notoriouſly known to all who

look into our courts, that the exerciſe of diſcipline in all its branches, and particularly in the caſe of ſcandalous miniſters, is conſtantly and uniformly diſcouraged and oppoſed by the prevailing party. A remarkable inſtance of this we had laſt Aſſembly, in the caſe of Mr Stewart (I wiſh I could have added the word, *late*) miniſter of Crieff.

It would be eaſy to ſhew, both from the nature of the thing, and from the hiſtory of the church, and conſtant experience, that where and when ever a ſtrict exereiſe of diſcipline has obtained, there, and then, the clergy have been regular and exemplary in their lives, acceptable and ſucceſsful in their miniſtrations. On the other hand, it is certain, that, in proportion as the reins of diſcipline have been ſlackened, in the ſame proportion has irreligion and profaneneſs conſtantly prevailed, and ſpread like an inundation, where the banks have given way; and eſpecially the clergy have grown uſeleſs, nay odious and contemptible. Irreligion never fails to bring about a relaxation of diſcipline: and this relaxation again cannot but, in its turn, repay the favour, by promoting irreligion. They are mutually cauſes and effects of one another.

The conſtant ſtruggle which this church has had with all its malignant enemies ever ſince the reformation, has, in effect, turned upon this very point. The diſputes we have had, were really at the bottom, not ſo much about forms of government, &c. as whether practical religion or licentiouſneſs ſhould prevail, or have the advantage in our conſtitution. Whatever external appearances ſuch a ſtruggle may contrive to hide itſelf under, this will always continue to be the chief ſubject of debate, while a religious and a worldly intereſt are contending within our bowels for victory. What was it that gave King James VI. ſo inveterate a prejudice againſt our conſtitution? Not any objections he could bring againſt it from the ſcripture. He once boaſted of it, in the language of the time, " that it was the ſincereſt " kirk in the world." But the truth is, neither he, nor his corrupt courtiers could bear the ſtrictneſs of its diſcipline. This led him to preſer the conſtitution of the Engliſh church, which, as to this point, is ſatisfied with only praying, as in their liturgy, " for the reſtoration of a godly diſcipline." On the other hand, what was it that begot ſuch an invincible averſion in our moſt religious people againſt that form of government? Not ſo much, I dare ſay, the arguments of the learned, which they might ſometimes have read, or heard of, but becauſe they ſaw it chiefly eſpouſed by the moſt licentious and profane, and always accompanied with a relaxation of diſcipline, that ſuffered the moſt abandoned ſinners to retain the name, profeſſion, and church-privileges of Chriſtians, and eſpecially encouraged and protected

protected a ſcandalous clergy, from whom they could reap no edification. When it became triumphant after the reſtoration, every body knows that the floodgates were, at the ſame time, opened for an inundation of all manner of licentiouſneſs and profaneneſs. What ſort of clergy it produced, Bp Burnet tells us in the hiſtory of his own times. "They were ignorant (he ſays) to "a reproach, and many of them were openly vitious. They were "a diſgrace to their order, and the ſacred function." And in the concluſion of that hiſtory, he ſays of the Engliſh clergy; "I ſay it with regret, I have obſerved the clergy in all the "places through which I have travelled, Papiſts, Lutherans, "Calviniſts, and Diſſenters; but of them all, our clergy is much "the moſt remiſs in their labours, and the leaſt ſevere in their "lives." I will not ſay, that there is any thing in the mere opinion of biſhops being a different order from preſbyters, that has any influence upon the corruption of manners. But I will ſay with the moſt undoubted aſſurance, that, be the conſtitution otherwiſe what it will, the want or the decay of diſcipline naturally muſt, and always does produce this effect. The fact is ſo certain and ſo conſtant, and the reaſon ſo obvious, that it is not eaſy to conceive, how thoſe who are enemies to diſcipline, eſpecially among the clergy, can have a due concern either for the purity of their manners, or for the ſucceſs of their labours.

If I ſhould utter my own ſentiments freely, they might be thought perhaps too ſevere, or too particularly pointed. And therefore I ſhall, upon this occaſion, let others ſpeak, whoſe praiſe is in the churches of the reformation. *Quicunque vel ſublatam diſciplinam cupiunt, vel ejus impediunt reſtitutionem, ſive hoc faciunt data opera, ſive per incogitantiam, eccleſiæ certe extremam diſſipationem quærunt.* Calv. Inſt. l. 4. c. 12. § 1. And again, § 4. *Sine hoc diſciplinæ vinculo, qui diu ſtare poſſe eccleſias confidunt, opinione falluntur; niſi forte impune carere poſſimus eo adminiculo quod Dominus fore nobis neceſſarium providit.* To the ſame purpoſe Zanchius *de eccleſia. Videant igitur principes et magiſtratus, qui hanc diſciplinam in eccleſia reſtitutam nolunt, quid agant. Hæc inſtituta eſt a Chriſto, ut perpetuo in eccleſia tanquam ſingularis theſaurus conſervetur: ergo qui eam exulare volunt, ſciant ſe velle Chriſtum exulare.— Qui hanc reſtitutam nolunt, ſciant eos nolle evangelium Chriſti, ſicut debet, reſtitutum*

Glad would I be, if I had it in my power to aſcribe the conduct of our managers to an error in judgment, or to any thing leſs criminal than a culpable indifference whether the intereſts of religion ſink or ſwim. But indeed it is impoſſible for me to believe them ſo groſsly ignorant either of facts, or of the nature

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of things, as not to know, (if they ever give themſelves the trouble to reflect upon the matter), that the extinction of religion will be the certain conſequence of the extinction of diſcipline among us. They may call us, who inſiſt for the exerciſe of it, warm men, and weak men, as they do: but ſurely, a church that is cold about ſuch an intereſt, or even lukewarm, like the Laodiceans, and neither cold nor hot, if the threatenings of Chriſt himſelf deſerve any credit, may ſoon expect to be ſpued out of his mouth.

We have ſtill ſome ſhadow of diſcipline in our inferior judicatories: and there is no branch of it more neceſſary than that which has the clergy for its object. *Et jane*, ſays Calvin, *ita decet, ut humaniore et laxiore (ut ita loquar) diſciplina plebs regatur: clerici inter ſe acriores exerceant cenſuras, minuſque longe ſibi quam aliis indulgeant.* But how long can the little we have of this kind be ſuppoſed to laſt, (though the number of its enemies was not every day increaſing), under the diſcouragement it meets with in the ſupreme court? There, we may, and do lay our account with being abuſed and ſcolded, at the bar, and even by ſome of the judges. There we will have every obſtruction laid in our way that can be contrived with any ſort of decency, or even without it, as in the laſt Aſſembly, to retard our progreſs at leaſt, and tire out the patience of the moſt perſevering. There, we may expect to have our juſteſt ſentences reverſed, after all the trouble and expence we have been at by long and frequent ſederunts, examining witneſſes, &c. and perhaps a notorious and ſcandalous criminal aſſoilzied *ſimpliciter*. He goes off in triumph, while his proſecutors, and immediate ſuperiors, (who, in the capacity of inferior judges, are more diſpoſed, God knows, to err on the ſide of forbearance and lenity, than otherwiſe), if they have been enabled by grace, in any meaſure, to do their duty, are diſmiſſed with ſhame and confuſion.

The recent examples that might be adduced in ſupport of this allegation, are but too many, and too notorious; indeed, abundantly ſufficient, and more than ſufficient to confirm our jealouſy, and to alarm our fears upon this ſubject. It would be endleſs to expatiate upon them all. The very names of Meſſ. Dalrymple, Anderſon, Lyell, &c. will put you in mind what ſtruggles it coſt, to get any thing like diſcipline exerciſed upon them, in oppoſition to our preſent managers, who exerted themſelves for their protection. Was not Mr Carſon, upon the firſt proceſs being brought to the dernier reſort, by their influence, aſſoilzied *ſimpliciter?* And though a ſcandalous, and conſequently uſeleſs miniſter, was he not, after all, ſuffered to die without being deprived of that ſacred character? And how ſhamefully was the lenity of the church expoſed to reproach in the caſe of

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Mr Niſbet, that diſgrace of the miniſterial character? A character that he was ſuffered to enjoy by his eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors, till after the gentlemen of the country had procured his baniſhment by a juſticiary-proceſs.

I think it neceſſary to mention ſome former deciſions, that the laſt Aſſembly's conduct in Mr Stewart's affair may appear in its proper connection, as a link of that chain wherewith our diſcipline is to be fettered. It is not ſo much a ſingle deciſion, as the uniformity of conduct in our ſupreme court, that alarms us. Moſt things come gradually to perfection. Had Cæſar diſcovered, at the firſt, the whole extent of his ambition, he would not have had ſo many followers. Our leaders are yet but in their mid-career. We have not yet ſeen all the effects, in their moſt ſhocking light, of that yoke of patronage which they are faſt wreathing about our necks. All that open and ſcandalous Simony, all thoſe dreadful ſcenes of clerical drunkenneſs, ſwearing, damning, whoredom, &c. the certain conſequences of our preſent meaſures, are not yet fully diſcloſed. But when once the hopeful project is quite accompliſhed, of putting the ſettlement of miniſters, without the leaſt control from either pariſh or preſbytery, entirely in the hands of the great, many of whom have abandoned our churches, and ſeem to regard the abovementioned peccadilloes as but trivial, and perhaps would not like a miniſter the worſe for keeping them in countenance; and when the reſtraint of diſcipline is totally removed; let us think, O let us think in time, what may then be expected, what always has been as often as the ſame cauſes concurred, what is at this day in England, and what muſt be among ourſelves, as certainly as that effects will follow their cauſes.

The effects, ſurely, can be at no great diſtance, when we ſee the cauſes operating ſo violently. The final period of our diſcipline (which has hitherto afforded us ſome ground for boaſting) cannot be very far off. Indeed what human, what Chriſtian patience will be ſufficient to bear up the few honeſt members of preſbyteries, tugging at that heavy oar againſt both wind and tide? The ſlothful indifference of the cold and lukewarm among us, the reſentment of the accuſed, the fiery oppoſition of his friends, the ingenious and plauſible arts of lawyers employed by him, to elude an inquiry or retard the proceſs, the odium we expoſe ourſelves to from the profaner part of the world, who have little ſenſe of the evil, and little feeling of the conſequences of it; in a word, the trouble, expence, and vexation that an extraordinary proceſs will readily coſt us, all this, perhaps, we might continue to bear: but the proſpect of its being in vain, and of our returning, after all, from a General Aſſembly, with diſapprobation and diſappointment, this is what, probably,

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we muſt ſuccumb under at laſt. And then, farewell, not only to a pious and uſeful clergy, but even to all decency of behaviour among us.

SECTION VIII.

The caſe of Mr Stewart, with nine obſervations upon the Aſſembly's ſentence in that cauſe.

AS to the caſe of Mr Stewart, it may ſeem ſtrange, but ſtrange as it is, I can aver, that though I was a member of the laſt Aſſembly, and gave punctual attendance every diet, yet, in that capacity, I know no more of the merits of this cauſe, or of the proofs of Mr Stewart's guilt, than you do. And therefore, as the powerful junto had influence enough to exclude me from what I had a right to as a judge in the cauſe, viz. a judicial knowledge of it, they muſt excuſe me, if I make ſo much the more uſe of their private information.

Indeed every body agreed to load this unhappy man with the ſcandal of drunkenneſs, I think, in the very higheſt conceivable degree. His own friends allowed, in converſation with me, that he was drunk every morning by nine o'clock, (if this be not an hyperbole), and that he was expoſed as an object of deriſion to the very children in the ſtreets of every town or village, and in almoſt every highway through which he paſſed. (A ſample of what may be yet more common.) The proofs in proceſs, not only of particular ſcandalous acts, but of his being habite and repute an habitual drunkard, and that not only before he was ſuſpended with certification, and had come under the moſt ſolemn engagements and promiſes of amendment, but likewiſe after all this, theſe proofs were, it ſeems, ſo clear and ſo ſtrong, that it was they who moſt favoured his cauſe, who had the influence to get them ſuppreſſed, and hindered their being read in court. So that he was, univerſally, given up as altogether incurable, and entirely abandoned to the dominion of this luſt. Indeed the accounts of him to which I had any acceſs, were ſuch, that I could not help making ſome allowance for expreſſions that ſeemed to be dictated by the indignation which his conduct excited. If I have been led into any error by truſting to hearſay-reports, his friends are to blame. I never met with one who contradicted the facts; and it was their fault that I had not better evidence.

Upon an unqueſtionable proof of theſe things, (I mean, what is admitted to be ſo, on all hands; for we could not procure a hearing of it), he was laid under the ſentence of depoſition by no leſs reſpectable a body than the Synod of Perth and Stirling,

Stirling, in the year 1767. From ſo juſt a ſentence no body, in his ſituation, could have thought of appealing, if it had not been for a too-well grounded confidence on a prevailing party in the General Aſſembly. Neither have his hopes been diſappointed. So powerful is their influence, and ſo backward are they in proceſſes of this kind, that this is now the third Aſſembly that has had ſo plain (alas! too plain) a cauſe before them. And when a deciſion could no longer be put off, he has, at laſt, obtained the very ſentence which he himſelf wiſhed and prayed for. In order to bring this about, the uſual forms of procedure behoved to be changed in his favour. Inſtead of proceeding in a regular manner, hearing papers and parties, and giving judgment upon the whole, it was propoſed, at the firſt entrance upon the cauſe, that a committee ſhould be appointed (the cauſe unheard) to bring in a conciliating meaſure. This conciliating meaſure was to change the ſentence of depoſition into that of ſuſpenſion, he offering a bond whereby the ſtipend was to be yielded to him that was to ſerve the cure, with a reſervation of 25 l. yearly to himſelf, and, at the ſame time, binding himſelf to keep without the bounds of the Preſbytery of Ochterarder. Upon this report of the committee, after various ſtruggles, I muſt be forgiven to ſay, there was what I cannot call leſs than a breach of faith; ſo fervent was the zeal for protecting immorality. For the hearing of parties, as uſual, being inſiſted for by the ſynod and preſbytery at the bar, to which they had an indiſputable right, and the ſame being likewiſe inſiſted for by many of the judges, who peremptorily refuſed to yield their undoubted claim to it, the omitting ſo eſſential a form appeared to be ſo evidently contrary to the cleareſt rules of juſtice, and to the eſtabliſhed methods of procedure in all courts whatſoever, that the Aſſembly did formally agree to it, ſo far, that the parties who had gone out, were actually called in by the authority of the court, and ordered to proceed. But no ſooner had they appeared at the bar, and begun to open the cauſe, than (as if that point had not been already diſcuſſed and over-ruled) they were interrupted by a motion made and ſeconded, to enter no farther into the cauſe, but to adopt the overture of the committee. This, after a warm debate, was, without hearing the cauſe, (for the firſt time, I muſt ſuppoſe, in any court that ever pretended ſo much as a regard to decency), carried by a majority of votes. Upon which I beg leave to make the following obſervations.

1. It appears evidently from the hiſtory of this affair, how extremely difficult it is already become, to get any ſort of cenſure inflicted upon a ſcandalous miniſter. When, in ſo obvious a caſe as this, ſuch a number of years has paſſed, before the proceſs was concluded, (nor is the miniſter depoſed at laſt), what

may be expected where the circumſtances may be ſuppoſed more favourable to the delinquent? It was not till the year 1763 that the Preſbytery of Ochterarder took any notice of a ſcandal in one of their own members, that had gone beyond their bounds, and was become ſo offenſive, that the ſynod was obliged to put them in mind of their duty. And after they did begin a proceſs, it has taken no leſs than ſeven years to bring it to an iſſue, ſuch as it is. Indeed the laſt ſerves to account for the firſt. To be ſure preſbyteries will be more and more averſe from this part of their duty, when they ſee how little encouragement, nay what contrary treatment they have to expect from a growing majority in the General Aſſembly. Inſtead of being ſtirred up to our duty, as the Preſbytery of Ochterarder was by the ſynod, we have nothing to expect from the Aſſembly, but that every *remora* in their power will be thrown in our way, the cauſe perhaps remitted on the moſt frivolous pretences, as this cauſe was by the commiſſion 1769, who put the preſbytery upon an idle and falſe ſcent after an exculpation, the abſurdity of which they could not but be conſcious of, and which could ſerve no other purpoſe but that of a pretence for not giving judgment in a clear cauſe. We may lay our account with the moſt affected delays, and when we have given attendance as parties, at no ſmall trouble and expence, we may find the cauſe referred to the commiſſion, and by the commiſſion from one quarterly meeting to another, as this cauſe actually was. We need not doubt that advantage will be taken of the leaſt ſlip made in the form of procedure, and perhaps, at laſt, our juſteſt ſentences finally reverſed. Is it poſſible, that the leaſt degree of diſcipline can long ſubſiſt under ſuch mortifying diſcouragements; even if there was more zeal among us for the glory of God, and ſpiritual proſperity of the church, than there, evidently, is? This indeed is the light in which it chiefly ſtrikes me.

2. Whereas the Aſſembly has enabled Mr Stewart to retain 25l. a-year out of the ſtipend of Crieff, after what every body knows of his character and incorrigibility; was this any thing elſe than a feeding of his luſt? And conſequently, is it not manifeſt, that thoſe who voted for this meaſure, are, as our law terms it, art and part guilty of the future acts of drunkenneſs which it enables him to commit? It is but too well known, that a maſter luſt muſt be ſerved in the firſt place, come of other demands what will. The abſolute dominion of this luſt in him was queſtioned by no body; and therefore they certainly indulged it, who furniſhed him with the means which they could not but know would be applied for that purpoſe.

3. Upon whom have they laid the burden of this indulgence? Had they opened their purſes, contributed but one ſhilling of

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their own, and put it, not in his hands, but in ſuch a way as might help to keep him from ſtarving, they would have had ſome better pretence to boaſt of their generoſity and compaſſion, and to blame our comparative want of it, had we fallen ſhort of them in any thing of this kind, or ſhould any of us deny him the proper offices of humanity conſiſtent with our duty in a court of judicature. But pray, where is the generoſity of alienating a conſiderable part of the ſtipend of Crieff from the purpoſe of maintaining him who ſerves the cure, for which it is not more than ſufficient, and applying it to furniſh means of intoxication to an idle drunkard? I have known, in caſes where a proof could not be had, a preſbytery accept of a demiſſion, clogged with a reſervation of ſome part of the ſtipend; becauſe it was the only method left them to get a part, when they had it not in their power to get the whole applied to the proper purpoſe. But when the whole was ſo clearly forfeited, as in Mr Stewart's caſe, and he lying under a juſt and regular ſentence of depoſition, which the Aſſembly had no pretence for reverſing in the ordinary forms; what leſs can it be called than downright robbery, to take what was none of their own, and diſpoſe of it, as they have done?

4. The ſynod had, upon the juſteſt grounds, depoſed Mr Stewart from the office, and deprived him of the character of a miniſter. The Aſſembly (only ſuſpending him from the exerciſe of the office, of which he has rendered himſelf utterly incapable) reſtored him to both, ſcandalous as they knew he had been, and was like to be. Where was their concern for the purity and credit of the miniſterial character? This is one of the main ends provided for by the exerciſe of diſcipline. We cannot keep our ſociety pure, by preventing the appearance of ſcandals among us; but we can, by immediately caſting out the ſcandalous, and depriving them of the character that has been ſtained by them. If we ſuffer them ſtill to retain the character, after they have ſhewn themſelves unworthy of it, or reſtore it, without the leaſt appearance of amendment, we then have an active hand in voluntarily bringing pollution upon the ſociety. Suppoſe this unhappy man to be found lying on the highway, weltering in his own vomit, (which is far from being an impoſſible or improbable ſuppoſition); is there no difference between the ſpectators being able to ſay, This man IS a miniſter, and being only able to ſay, This man WAS a miniſter?

5. It is pretended, that a regard for the credit of the miniſterial character moved them to what they did, as well as compaſſion for a miſerable object; as it would give them pain to ſee one who had been in that ſtation, begging from door to door. For my part, I own, I cannot eaſily be perſuaded, that this motive had a great deal of weight, from the little attention that was beſtowed upon the ma-

nagement and application of the fund allowed him. In converſation with one who was laying hold on that pretence, I aſked him if he thought that 25 l. would keep him from beggary? His anſwer was, That "he did not believe 400 would." His beſt friends muſt be conſcious, that to leave any thing in his own power, is providing him, not in bread, but in drink. But after all, is this the only kind of regard they have for the miniſterial character? Would they be more affected to ſee one who had been a miniſter poor, than to ſee one who is a miniſter ſcandalouſly drunk? And is there nothing of a worldly ſpirit bewrayed in ſuch a way of thinking?

6. In this affair, the Aſſembly (acknowledged to be only a part of our eccleſiaſtical legiſlature) was acting in their judicative capacity; and, conſequently, were as much bound by the laws and conſtitutions of the ſociety as any inferior judicatory. Indeed no member of Aſſembly (who ſits there only by virtue of his commiſſion) has any power from his conſtituents, when he goes beyond, or preſumes to diſpenſe with our eſtabliſhed laws. In the very boſom of his commiſſion, he is expreſsly obliged "to conſult, vote, and determine in all matters that come be-"fore them, agreeable to the conſtitutions of this church." By theſe, the cenſure to be inflicted on Mr Stewart was fixed; and he who took upon him to diſpenſe with it, was, without all queſtion, acting illegally. The Form of Proceſs is known to be our ſtanding rule in all affairs of this kind. There, we are told, chap. iii. even though not ſpeaking of miniſters particularly, that "one ſingle act of drunkenneſs may be clothed with ſuch "circumſtances, as to bring the perſon guilty under the cenſure "of the leſſer excommunication." And in chap. vii. concerning miniſters, § 5. it is expreſsly ſtatuted, That "if he confeſs, "and the matter confeſſed be of a ſcandalous nature, cenſurable "in others, they are *inſtanter* to depoſe him." And in § 7. the ſame thing is ordered, "if the judicatory ſhall find the ſcandal "ſufficiently proven." And the Aſſembly 1638 ordain, "That "miniſters being found drunkards, be depoſed *ſimpliciter*." Some excuſe may be made for the ſynod, who reſted at firſt in a ſentence of ſuſpenſion, from an apprehenſion they might have, which we ſee was too well grounded, that a higher cenſure would be reverſed by the Aſſembly, and from the proſpect they might have at that time, of the pannel's amendment, of which, it ſeems, he made many promiſes; beſides that there was added to that cenſure a certification, that, upon his being afterwards convicted of any one act of drunkenneſs, he ſhould be *inſtanter* depoſed; of which an opportunity was ſoon afforded, and laid hold upon accordingly. But none of theſe excuſes can be pled for the Aſſembly's not ſetting a better example to inferior judicatories,

ries, of a due regard to the laws of this church. What would you think of the judges in our criminal court, if, after the parliament had expreſsly enacted, that murderers ſhall either be diſſected, or hung in chains, they ſhould order one of the moſt execrable murderers to be decently buried, or perhaps only to pay a ſmall fine? And what would you think of our conſtitution, if this ſhould be ſuffered to run into a conſtant practice?

7. All this, however, was far outdone by another ſtep ſo groſsly abſurd, ſo arbitrary and illegal, ſo glaringly inconſiſtent with the eſtabliſhed method of procedure, not only in our courts, but in all courts whatſoever, civil or eccleſiaſtic, Chriſtian, Jewiſh, or Heathen, ſo directly contrary to the cleareſt rules of juſtice, to the very light of nature, and the plaineſt reaſon of things, that I cannot mention it without bluſhing on their account. What I mean is, their obſtinately refuſing to let the cauſe be opened at the bar, or to let the parties be heard upon it, either by reading papers, or by the uſual pleadings. A cauſe, wherein legal proceedings had been held, by libel and proof, and judgment pronounced in the inferior courts, and was now to be finally decided by a numerous court of new judges, from the moſt diſtant corners of this church, many of whom had no other opportunity to know any thing of the matter, but truſted entirely to the information they were entitled to receive in court. I was a member of the court, and had a right, at leaſt, to be a judge of the cauſe. And yet, though many of us demanded, and inſiſted on it, I can ſay, that I did not hear one article, one word of the libel read, not one example of the proofs taken in the cauſe, neither reaſons of appeal, nor anſwers; nor were the parties permitted to give us the leaſt information how the matter ſtood, *viva voce*.

I am really aſhamed to ſee a zeal for the deſtruction of diſcipline ſo very raging, as to carry men over all bounds whatever, and induce them to trample under foot the moſt eſtabliſhed rules of procedure that have hitherto been regarded as the moſt ſacred and inviolable. Nicodemus aſked the Jewiſh ſanhedrim, *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doth?* John vii. 51. This he ſeems to have taken for a ſuppoſition ſo abſurd, that no one could be found that had the confidence or the folly to make it. The ſame account we have of the Roman laws and manners, Acts xxv. 16. And Solomon tells us, Prov. xxviii. 13. *He that anſwereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and ſhame unto him.* Indeed, if it be folly, it muſt be ſhame, ſooner or later.

The Synod of Perth and Stirling were parties in the cauſe, and from being members of the court were brought to the bar. Had they not a right to be heard there at leaſt? Some of them

who were not members of Aſſembly, had come up all the way on that ſingle account. Beſides the public intereſt they had in the matter, in ſo far as it concerned the glory of God, and the edification of his people, eſpecially in their bounds; they had likewiſe a private intereſt in it, and a right to be heard in their own defence. They had paſſed a very heavy ſentence upon one of their brethren, which was now to be affirmed or reverſed, *i. e.* to be judicially found right or wrong. Were they not then moſt juſtly entitled to be heard upon the grounds of that ſentence, before it was to be ſo publicly and finally either approved or diſapproved? Could they have imagined, when they left their own houſes, that they were to be condemned unheard?

And if the parties had great injuſtice done them by this very new method of procedure, ſurely, ſome of us who were members of court in that as well as other cauſes, had reaſon to complain of our treatment, when almoſt the one half of us were cut off from our privilege of judging in the cauſe, by the other. We were commiſſioned by our conſtituents as amply as the reſt, "to "conſult, vote, and determine in all matters that were to come "before the Aſſembly." Here was a matter of great importance to ourſelves and our conſtituents; wherein our own credit, the credit of the miniſterial character, nay the glory of God, and the intereſt of religion, were all very deeply concerned. We had come up, ſome of us from a great diſtance, at no ſmall trouble and expence, in the faith that we were ſufficiently authoriſed to conſult and determine in this or any other cauſe that was before the Aſſembly. And yet, without the allegeance of any fault or forfeiture on our part, we were, by an arbitrary act of thoſe who had no higher powers than we had, at once cut off from the roll of judges. Such of us as gave attention to the dictates of our conſciences, were extremely ſenſible, that we could not judge in a cauſe that we had not heard, which ſome of us did, really, know very little about, and that little only by hearſay too. For my own part, I can ſafely ſay, that, to this hour, I do not know, even as a private perſon, the circumſtances and proof of one ſingle article of the libel. The only thing that was replied to our complaints of ſuch treatment, ſeemed to be adding inſult to injuſtice. We were told in open court, "If you diſapprove "the motion, you can give your votes againſt it." The meaning of which, what is it elſe, than if we had been addreſſed in ſuch terms as theſe? "Do not imagine, that the buſineſs here, "in what is ſometimes called reaſoning, is to ſatisfy you of the "juſtice or reaſonableneſs of our conduct. The only queſtion "is, Who has moſt ſtrength? Try your ſtrength by a vote. "And if we outnumber you, it is all the ſatisfaction you are to "expect."

I think it not very improbable, that ſeveral members, who voted their approbation of the committee's overture, knew as little of the affair as I did. More, I am ſure, they could not know in a judicial capacity. And yet, under this degree of knowledge, or rather ignorance of the cauſe, what did they? Why, by a formal ſentence of a court of judicature, from which there lay no appeal, they, readily and blindly, reverſed a ſentence of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, without ſuffering them to ſay one word in defence of it. Nay further, they inflicted a heavy puniſhment upon one of their brethren, who, for any thing they knew as members of court, might be an innocent man; not only ſuſpending him from the exerciſe of his office, but denuding him of a conſiderable part of his ſtipend, and baniſhing him, under a ſevere penalty, beyond the bounds of the preſbytery to which he belonged: and all this, without having had one ground for ſuch a cenſure laid before them. Are not ſuch gentlemen finely qualified for being judges? Well-diſciplined troops, indeed, they muſt be acknowledged to be, (as I have heard that their officers have boaſted of them), well qualified for following their leaders implicitly, as far and as faſt in the dark, as if they had the brighteſt ſunſhine to guide their way. And is this the ſort of diſcipline that is to be ſubſtituted in the room of that which they with ſo much zeal are labouring to deſtroy?

8. Another obſervation I muſt take the liberty to make upon the above ſentence of the Aſſembly, as indicating the prevalence of a worldly ſpirit above any concern for the intereſt of religion, and as being of a very different complexion from the divine law, is, its contrariety to an expreſs injunction of God himſelf relative to courts of judicature: Exod. xxiii. 3. *Neither ſhalt thou countenance a poor man in his cauſe.* This is a caution extremely ſeaſonable, when public ſpirit runs low. Then, men are very apt, even in the ſeat of judgment, to let the temporal intereſt of an individual weigh againſt the public intereſt of ſociety, of a nation, or a church, in a word, the intereſt of religion, and even the moſt valuable, the ſpiritual and eternal intereſt of the criminal himſelf. In the eyes of worldly men, ſenſible things, temporal happineſs or miſery, look wondrous big; while ſpiritual things, and the intereſt of religion, ſcarcely make an impreſſion. The poverty to which Mr Stewart has reduced himſelf, was the only pretence for not affirming the Synod's ſentence; and compaſſion was mightily celebrated upon that occaſion, as one of the nobleſt virtues. Far be it from me to detract from its due praiſes. I hope I would be enabled by grace, in a private capacity, to exerciſe it towards this unhappy man upon a proper opportunity, in any way conſiſtent with the intereſt of religion,

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conſiſtent with the laws and conſtitutions of this church, and conſiſtent with his own moſt valuable concerns. But the error which ſeems to have miſled many members of Aſſembly, conſiſted in confounding two things that ought to be carefully diſtinguiſhed, *viz.* the acting in a private, and acting in a public capacity. Compaſſion is a beautiful part of a character in private life: but it is what a judge upon the bench ſhould endeavour, with his utmoſt efforts, to diveſt himſelf of; or rather (to expreſs the thing more properly) which he ſhould extend, beyond the conſideration of an individual, to the public intereſt of ſociety. To relieve the miſerable at our own expence, when it cannot hurt any other perſon or any public intereſt, is amiable and praiſe-worthy: but to ſcreen the guilty at the expence of the innocent; to make a proviſion for them which coſts us no more but the breath of our mouth, to the encouragement of vice and detriment of the public, is infamous and ſhameful. If the feelings of compaſſion for a criminal at the bar were allowed to ſway the mind of a judge in pronouncing ſentence, they would ſoon extinguiſh other feelings of a more extenſive and important nature, whereby he ought, in that capacity, to be actuated. Let the law be executed, whatever the criminal may ſuffer. A judge muſt, in a court of judicature, yield to the dictates of his reaſon, and to the laws of the ſociety whoſe ſervant he is; not to the feelings of his affections. No ſort of compaſſion is more natural, or more neceſſary and laudable, than that of parents toward their children: *Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb?* And yet a father is commanded to *chaſten his ſon while there is hope; and let not*, ſays Solomon, *thy ſoul ſpare for his crying.*

9. The laſt obſervation I ſhall make upon this ſubject is, the encouragement given, by this deciſion, to a vice in miniſters that muſt be allowed to be utterly inconſiſtent with the exerciſe of their office. None that are addicted to it will, after this, be afraid of any higher cenſure. This is a precedent, that may, in moſt caſes, be pled with great advantage. The plea of poverty can never be wanting in a drunkard. And I think, of all the inſtances that I have heard of, there are none, even where depoſition was deſerved, without ſome more extenuating circumſtances, than in the preſent caſe, either as to the frequency, the degree, or the proſpect of amendment. I ſpeak according to my information. And therefore ſuſpenſion with an annuity out of the ſtipend is the higheſt cenſure that any drunken miniſter will, after this, lay his account with. The laſt Aſſembly has, in effect, taken upon them, in a moſt unconſtitutional way, to repeal all our laws upon that ſubject. To what purpoſe can any inferior judicatory inflict a higher cenſure, when they ſee how

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it has been reduced in the laſt reſort, in an inſtance attended with the very higheſt imaginable aggravations?

If the encouragement hereby given to ſcandalous miniſters was to proceed no further, even this might alarm us. But when we add to it the gradual relaxation of diſcipline; when we are obliged to look upon this as a ſtep to its total abolition, as a frown upon any inferior judicatory that ſtill dares venture upon the exerciſe of it; the proſpect may be pleaſing to drunkards, and other ſcandalous clergymen, but, I believe, very melancholy to all who have the intereſt of religion, and the purity of this church, ſeriouſly at heart.

SECTION IX.

A fourth proof of the charge, from their unrelenting perſecution of Mr Gilleſpie, whoſe caſe is ſet forth, with the egregious and unſcriptural miſapplication both of zeal, and the moderation of our preſent leaders.

THE worldly ſpirit that ſeems to have dictated the meaſures of the majority in the laſt Aſſembly, ſufficiently appears, in the honour they put upon a champion for the playhouſe; in the total diſregard for the edification of our people and the ſucceſs of the goſpel, diſcovered in the ſettlements appointed by them; and in the little concern they ſhewed for the morals of the clergy, by the favour ſo zealouſly and ſo irregularly beſtowed upon a ſcandalous miniſter. All this would have been a ſufficient indication of the ſpirit that prevailed, though there had been no opportunity of manifeſting a perſecuting ſpirit againſt good men, in the caſe of Mr Gilleſpie. Indeed this never fails, in a greater or leſs meaſure, to accompany and complete an irreligious character. In proportion as worldly things and worldly men are favoured and preferred, ſo will good men be the objects of hatred, contempt, and perſecution. Nothing could have contributed more effectually to ſet the conduct of the Aſſembly in the cleareſt point of view, than the contraſt between their treatment of the drunken Mr Stewart, and of the pious Mr Gilleſpie. But the firſt had only broken the divine law; whereas the other, by too ſtrict a regard for it, had ventured to diſpute the illegal authority, which they had uſurped, and were determined to maintain, as far as worldly motives could have any influence.

The caſe of this Reverend brother (for ſo I muſt ſtill call him) is ſo well known, that it will be needleſs to expatiate upon it. I ſhall only obſerve, that a ſettlement having been appointed, within the bounds of the preſbytery whereof he was a member, con-

trary to the will of the congregation, and conſequently againſt the ſtanding rules and conſtitutions of this church, which none of her judicatories can, agreeably to our conſtitution, diſobey, or command others to do ſo; he was one of thoſe who refuſed obedience to ſo illegal an order. He pled in his own defence, not only the laws of this church, but the laws of the great Head and ſole King of the church, whereby we are expreſsly prohibited to do any thing that tends, not to the edification, but to the deſtruction of his people; and at the ſame time are aſſured, that *to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*, or ſinful. The Aſſembly 1752, before whom this affair came, were in no ſort of ſtrait to get their illegal appointment executed, without encroaching upon the rights of conſcience; there being a ſufficient quorum of that preſbytery willing and ready to do it. But nothing would ſatisfy them, unleſs it were likewiſe done by ſuch of them as, in the doing of it, would be conſcious that they were committing a deliberate and known ſin. This, I acknowledge, is charging that Aſſembly with ſo aſtoniſhing a degree of wickedneſs, that I wiſh it were in my power to retract it. Gladly would I do ſo, if you or any body elſe could point out to me a poſſibility of their ſeeing the matter in any other light. Whatever were their own views of the thing commanded, had they been to execute it themſelves; could they avoid being ſenſible, that in the views of others, and particularly in Mr Gilleſpie's views, it would have been a ſin for him to do what they required? Does any body imagine, that I can innocently do a thing which appears to me to be a ſin? O the cruelty of worldly men! Did they know that, to a conſcientious man, the being tied to a ſtake was an arrant triſle in compariſon with what they ſo unrelentingly inſiſted on? So the being deprived of his ſtipend appeared to Mr Gilleſpie and others. For which cauſe and nothing elſe, he was, in the name of Chriſt, depoſed *ab officio et beneficio*.

Several even of thoſe who voted for this unrighteous ſentence, ſenſible that the crime intended to be puniſhed, was, by no means, owing to any want of reſpect for Jeſus Chriſt, for whom this pretended criminal was known to have an extraordinary regard, did always avow, that they would not have interpoſed the ſacred name of Jeſus Chriſt in the affair, nor would they have deprived Mr Gilleſpie of the miniſterial character, had they known of any other way, or could have worded the ſentence in any other terms, whereby they could have, legally, taken his ſtipend from him. This was the part of the puniſhment upon which worldly men are apt to lay the greateſt ſtreſs, and which the judges in this cauſe ſeemed to think would be moſt effectual for their purpoſe. From hence his friends conceived ſome hopes, that now when this part of the ſentence could not be affected,

fected, a mitigation of it in other reſpects might be obtained, inadequate indeed to their views, but ſuch at leaſt as might be deemed conſiſtent even with the views of the majority. And therefore a motion was made in the Aſſembly 1769, which was by them referred to the laſt Aſſembly, importing, that Mr Gilleſpie might be put upon the ſame footing with other miniſters who are now joined in communion with him, and call themſelves *the Preſbytery of Relief*. They are ſuffered, by the Aſſembly's deciſion, to retain the character of miniſters of the goſpel of Chriſt, but are rendered incapable of enjoying any benefice in the eſtabliſhment. This notion did indeed appear to ſeveral of us, who were members of laſt Aſſembly, a great deal too low. And it was moved by ſome, that it ſhould be extended to the taking off the cenſure *ſimpliciter*. But this they fell from, and acquieſced in the terms of the Aſſembly 1769, as what they could not imagine the very greateſt enemies of the good man could pretend to oppoſe. I call them his friends who made the motion, as I doubt not they were; though the truth is, he could neither loſe nor gain much, whatever way the matter went. It was rather doing a friendly office to the character of this church, and particularly to the prevailing majority. To them it gave an opportunity of exerciſing a moderation, which, upon other occaſions, they affect to claim as their diſtinguiſhing character. Here they might have diſplayed it to the greateſt advantage, without diſconcerting, in the leaſt degree, (as far as I can perceive), their plan of operations. But, it ſeems, their moderation (for of this they, ſurely, have a great deal upon ſome occaſions) is entirely exhauſted upon the enemies of Chriſt and religion; for they had none to ſpare upon a zealous friend of both. The ſame party that reſtored the character of a miniſter to Mr Stewart, did, by a vote, refuſe it to Mr Gilleſpie.

It is certain, that moderation and zeal are, both of them, Chriſtian virtues, which we are frequently called to the exerciſe of. But it is likewiſe certain, that both of them may be, and often are moſt groſsly miſapplied. The diviſions that have ariſen among Chriſtians afford great occaſion and opportunity for putting this branch of our Chriſtian temper to the trial; and indeed nothing can more ſtrongly mark a character, than the occaſions upon which either one's zeal or moderation is moſt ready to be exerciſed.

If religion, or the church (I do not ſay Preſbyterian, or Epiſcopal, &c. but the Chriſtian church) is in the moſt imminent danger, by infidelity gaining ground among its profeſſed members, or by their rejecting the moſt important and eſſential doctrines that diſtinguiſh the Chriſtian revelation from Heatheniſm; if it is like to be made a queſtion, whether the object of our worſhip be a mere creature, whether men be in a fallen ſtate,

and need a ſacrifice of infinite value, and the aſſiſtance of omnipotent grace; if, at the ſame time, it is threatened with a general departure from the purity and ſtrictneſs of Chriſtian morals; if a licentiouſneſs in practice, as well as doctrine, is beginning to ſpread among the clergy themſelves, ſome of whom are venturing, both by doctrine and example, to encourage and promote the diſſipation and Heatheniſh pomp of intoxicating diverſions in a profane and luxurious age; all this, one would think, might afford ſufficient occaſion for the zeal of church-rulers to be exerted. Here it is, where the ſcripture points our zeal; Gal. iv. 18. Tit. ii. 14. Jude 3. Rev. iii. 15. 16. 19. But if, on the contrary, it is there eſpecially, where they chuſe to exerciſe the moderation they boaſt of; if no arguments or ſolicitations can prevail with them to move one ſtep in oppoſition to any thing of this kind, but every attempt that way is uniformly oppoſed and thwarted, and, by their ſuperior power, conſtantly diſappointed, while the moſt formidable thunder of their artillery is let fly in all its raging violence againſt any ſerious Chriſtian who preſumes to differ from them, though but in ſome of the external circumſtances of church-government; is the zeal, is the moderation here formed upon the ſcripture-model, or applied as is there directed?

The ſcripture not only requires us to be zealous upon proper occaſions, and according to knowledge; it likewiſe requires us to let *our moderation be known unto all men.* But in what caſes is our moderation directed to be exerciſed? Not ſurely, when the moſt important intereſts of religion are in hazard; not when the converſion of ſinners, and the edification or comfort of ſaints, are like to be ſacrificed to the arbitrary pleaſure of worldly men; not in the caſe of rioting and drunkenneſs, chambering and wantonneſs; not when the whole, or the principal doctrines of Chriſtianity are doubted or denied. Theſe are the very caſes where it is incumbent upon us to *contend earneſtly*, and where lukewarmneſs would provoke Chriſt to ſpue us out of his mouth. But ſhould any ſincere Chriſtian, who ſhews his faith of all the eſſential doctrines that affect the vitals of religion, by a life conformable to the precepts of it, ſhould ſuch a one differ from church-rulers, not in theſe eſſential doctrines, (I ſpeak not here of the private ſentiments of any who may have got the government into their hands; I mean the public doctrines of the church, which they are obliged at leaſt to profeſs), ſhould they differ in their ſentiments only about ſmaller matters, perhaps certain modes of expreſſion, or extraeſſential circumſtances, wherein the life of religion, and a compliance with the terms of ſalvation, are not concerned; there it is where the ſcripture requires their moderation to be exerciſed. *Him that is weak in the faith* they are required to *receive, but not to doubtful diſputations,*

tations. And what is meant by being *weak in the faith*, appears from what follows, viz. an error only about meats, or days, or ſuch like things that do not affect the ſubſtance of Chriſtian doctrine. Indeed the more that we are obliged to a zealous oppoſition in the caſe of either doctrines or practices inconſiſtent with true religion; ſo much the more incumbent is it upon us, for ſeveral obvious reaſons, to exerciſe the greateſt lenity and moderation where-ever there is room for it, conſiſtent with the ſubſtance of Chriſtianity, and to extend not only our charity, but even our Chriſtian communion, to all that appear to be the true and honeſt diſciples of our common Lord. Accordingly, our Form of Proceſs, in conformity to the ſpirit of the apoſtolical inſtructions, has, in the 7th chapter, concerning miniſters, directed "lenitives to be uſed," not only in the caſe of "ſuch errors as are not groſs, and ſtriking at the vitals "of religion," but likewiſe in the caſe of "ſuch practices "as, in their own nature, manifeſtly ſubvert that order, u-"nity, and peace which Chriſt hath eſtabliſhed in his church."

And now may I not aſk, In what has Mr Gilleſpie erred? But I muſt correct my ſtyle; as, in my apprehenſion, the error is on the ſide of his oppoſers. I think, inſtead of any cenſure, he deſerves the thanks of this church, and has them too from her genuine ſons, for the firmneſs with which he maintained that important branch of ſubordination in our conſtitution, the ſubordination of the Aſſembly itſelf to the ſtanding laws. But let me aſk, In what did he *differ* from the prevailing party? Was it in any thing but a circumſtance of church-government? Can it be pretended, that it ſtrikes at the vitals of religion. But where is the lenity? where is the moderation ſo much boaſted of, and indeed acknowledged to be liberally exerciſed upon infidels, heretics, and ſcandalous perſons? While it is with the utmoſt difficulty that a proceſs can be raiſed againſt any ſuch delinquents, and after ſeven years continuance, the juſteſt ſentence perhaps reverſed; was not this faithful ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt ſummarily depoſed, without a libel, without a fair trial for his miniſtry, for his character, for his livelihood, in direct defiance of the Form of Proceſs, where, it was thought, we had at leaſt this ſecurity for theſe valuable intereſts? Where were then all the feelings of humanity ſo much celebrated upon other occaſions? Not a word of compaſſion, not a word then of reſerving a ſingle ſixpence out of the ſtipend. And if lenitives are preſcribed by our conſtitutional laws, in ſuch a caſe as his muſt appear to his greateſt enemies; where was the lenity of the laſt Aſſembly in refuſing ſo very ſmall and inconſiderable a mitigation of a cenſure he has now lien under almoſt twenty years, to the reproach (not of him, for it has added a veneration to his character, but) of this church? Indeed the mitigation

ſought

ſought was ſo ſmall, that, for my part, I was aſhamed to find that no more was moved for. But the more trifling that it was, ſo much the more did the refuſal of it ſerve to manifeſt the perſecuting ſpirit of the majority.

SECTION X.

The original ſentence againſt Mr Gilleſpie, ſhewn to be very ill defended in the laſt Aſſembly.

TO account for all this unrelenting ſeverity, high words are often ſubſtituted in the place of arguments, of which we had an example at the laſt aſſembly, which was once like to have brought out an eclairciſſement, which is very much wanted upon this ſubject, and which, I am ſorry, there was any pretence afforded for avoiding. In the debate upon this affair, after ſome very high flights of this ſort, one who had not ſpoke upon it before, ſaid, "he could not ſit ſtill, and hear ſuch doctrine paſs uncontradicted in that houſe. An Honourable "member," he ſaid, "had aſſerted in face of the Aſſembly, "that the very exiſtence of ſociety depended upon a punctual "obedience to all the commands of ſuperiors, without examination *: whereas he had the very beſt authority to ſay, that "God

* This doctrine of Mr Hobbes would, if received, diſgrace all the martyrs who are ſpoken of ſo honourably in the ſcripture, and expoſe all the perſecuted, upon whom Chriſt has pronounced a bleſſing, as the bane of human ſociety. For why did they ſhed their blood? Why did they ſuffer perſecution? but becauſe they refuſed obedience to ſome commands of their ſuperiors. To the opinion of a Scotch lawyer, even as reduced by the correction of his Reverend ſecond, let me here oppoſe the opinion of an Engliſh lawyer. The Recorder of London is not only an officer of that corporation, but is bound by oath "to come at the warning of the "mayor and the ſheriffs, and to ride and go with them upon all occaſions, when "need ſhall be, to maintain the ſtate of the city." Yet when the late addreſs and remonſtrance of the city was to be preſented to the King, the Recorder, being of opinion that it was libellous and criminal, abſolutely refuſed to go with it. For this he was called to account by the common council; and in defence of his conduct, among other things, he ſaid,

"I cannot conceive that this court can want to be informed of the reaſons of my conduct on this occaſion, as it cannot be forgot, that I openly declared my opinion of the language of the addreſs both in the committee, and in this court: for though I might be miſtaken in that opinion, (having no pretenſions to infallibility); yet having that opinion, and having, as it was my duty, declared it to you, it was impoſſible for me to take any part in the farther proſecution of the meaſure.

"As a lawyer, as a moral man, and a man of honour, could I, againſt my judgment, and againſt the conviction of my own mind, concur in an act which appeared to me to be criminal?——It is with aſtoniſhment I find, that any man can wiſh to preſs ſuch a duty upon me.

"What effects may not party-rage produce, when it can reconcile a love of liberty, and a generous concern for the rights of the ſubject, which this court has always expreſſed, and I am perſuaded has always felt, with ſo ſlaviſh and ſo tyrannical a principle, as that which attempts to ſubdue a liberal mind? which endeavours to drive a man, by the exertion of authority, into an active ſubmiſſion to meaſures againſt his judgment and his conſcience?

"When I was of opinion that ſuch riding and going was not only unadviſed, but unlawful and criminal, is the oath to be extended to ſuch a caſe? Is it not one of the firſt principles of ethics, that an oath cannot impoſe an obligation to do an unlawful act?——I am ſworn to be faithful to his Majeſty, and to the city of London

in

" God himſelf threatened the diſſolution of a ſociety for this " very reaſon, *becauſe they willingly walked after the command-* " *ment*. A Reverend member," [he farther obſerved], ſenſible " perhaps that his friend had carried the matter too far, had, how- " ever, extended the ſame maxim to all ſuch inferiors as acted in " a miniſterial capacity. That he was ſure his brother was too " well acquainted with church-hiſtory to be at any loſs for in- " numerable inſtances of deciſions in church courts, which it " would have been a ſin to execute. In mentioning ſome of " them," he ſaid, " he ſhould confine himſelf to that kind of " deciſions which had occaſioned this debate, the ſettlement of " vacancies in the church. One council ordered a child of " four years of age to be ordained Archbiſhop of Rheims. " Another appointed one to be Patriarch of Conſtantinople " who could neither read nor write." And he put the queſtion to his brother, " whether he would have had freedom to ex- " ecute ſuch orders?" The return made to this queſtion, was ſomewhat ambiguous, at leaſt not ſo plain and ſo open as might have been expected. He ſaid, " Since he was called upon, he " would anſwer, that, in ſuch a caſe, he would either obey, or " leave the ſociety." To this it was replied, That " by leaving " the ſociety, muſt be meant, either a voluntary deſertion of " his ſtation, or ſubmitting to a ſentence of his ſuperiors caſt- " ing him out. That as to the laſt, to be ſure, the refuſing to " obey did neceſſarily imply a running the riſk of it. But that " was what one could not help, and was, in reality, no deed of " his, but of them who inflicted the puniſhment." And the gentleman was again deſired to ſay, if, in the caſes mentioned, he would have voted ſuch a cenſure for ſuch a fault? What he would have anſwered to this queſtion, I know not. For though he roſe, as if to ſpeak, he was prevented by the interpoſition of others. Whether they imagined him in any diſtreſs, I ſhall not ſay. If this was the caſe, he was relieved by a cry, that the Aſ- ſembly's time was not to be taken up by a perſonal altercation be- tween two members. Upon which he ſat down without ſaying a word more upon the ſubject. An example which could not but influence his antagoniſt to proceed no farther; though the o- ther, and indeed the true ſenſe of leaving the ſociety, was left untouched.

I thought it a pity, that any interruption ſhould have ben gi- ven to what had the appearance of ſuch cloſe reaſoning. Many a looſe declamation have I known borne with more patience, that was more remarkable for perſonal ſarcaſms than for throw- ing light upon the matter in hand. How can the time allotted

in the office of Recorder: if theſe duties ſhould claſh, the firſt is the ſuperior, and muſt be obeyed."

For the opinion of a celebrated Roman lawyer, ſee Plin. epiſt. lib. iii. ep. 9.

for

for deliberating upon any cauſe in the Aſſembly be better employed, than in endeavouring to go to the bottom of the ſubject, by bringing out, on either ſide, the real principles upon which the different opinions are founded, and running an argument up to a point, in a calm and diſpaſſionate manner, as this was likely to have been? To ſee men grow uneaſy upon ſuch an occaſion, looks as if it was not truth that they were ſeeking after. But as a ſtop was put to the progreſs of this argument in the Aſſembly, it may not, perhaps, be amiſs to purſue it a little farther now.

And here I muſt obſerve, in the firſt place, that it is not without reaſon, that I have ſaid, the above anſwer to the firſt queſtion was not ſo open and ingenuous as might have been expected. If he who gave it durſt have ventured in ſuch an audience, he might have acknowledged frankly, that he had no ſcruple to execute ſuch orders as had been mentioned. For it is the avowed principle of the party, That ſinful actions, even when the ſinfulneſs of them is apparent to the executor himſelf, may, and ought to be done, upon the command of an earthly ſuperior. In this, as in other inſtances, they accommodate their *morale* to the taſte of worldly men, who laugh at the ſimpletons that expoſe themſelves to perſecution upon a point of conſcience, like the apoſtles, who thought it was better to obey God than men, and ſuffered for it too.

You may eaſily imagine, I would not venture to lay ſo groſs a thing to their charge, did I not know that I was walking upon ſure ground. They have furniſhed us with the moſt authentic proof of this heavy accuſation, in a paper which was publiſhed, and ſigned by the heads of the party, and particularly by the very perſon who made the above reply, about the time when the diſputed cenſure was firſt threatened, and at laſt actually inflicted upon Mr Gilleſpie. This, I believe, they will not pretend to deny. If they ſhould, it was ſo plainly demonſtrated, in writings that were publiſhed about the ſame time, as ſuperſedes the neceſſity of any farther illuſtration; eſpecially as theſe writings continue to this day without the leaſt ſhadow or attempt of a reply. Indeed the pernicious doctrine ſtill continues too, without a recantation. The firſt was, ſurely, a debt owing to their own character, if injuſtice was done them in the imputation, and the reaſoning whereby it was ſupported. And if there was none, a recantation was a debt due to truth and the public, unleſs they ſtill perſiſt in their adherence to it.

As for the latter branch of the alternative, viz. leaving the ſociety, it is what men of their principles can never have any occaſion for; and, when compared with the reſt of their doctrine, cannot be regarded in any other light, but as a ſneer upon thoſe whom they call (it is ſaid) *conſcientious fools*. Accordingly, it is ſcarcely ever mentioned, till they be preſſed in the argument upon

upon the darling point, that all the orders of ſuperiors, be what they will, ought to be executed; and are obliged to have recourſe to it by way of refuge, when inſtances are given of commands, the ſinfulneſs of which they dare not deny. But ſince they do make this uſe of it, let us ſee what ſhelter it affords them.

By leaving the ſociety, they cannot mean, the being thruſt out of it by thoſe that have the power of cutting them off; becauſe in this they are paſſive: whereas the queſtion was, what they themſelves would do in ſuch a caſe? In this ſenſe, Mr Gilleſpie may be ſaid to have left the ſociety of this church; though it is certain, it was no action of his. By this expreſſion then muſt be meant, a voluntary deſerting their ſtation. I know not if they have beſtowed ſo much conſideration upon a thing that ſeems to have had no original place in their thoughts upon this ſubject, and which they are only ſometimes driven to in diſtreſs of argument, as to form a diſtinct idea of all that is included in the expreſſion. But if we conſider with what indifference they affect to ſpeak of the diviſions and ſeceſſions which their meaſures have produced, poſſibly they may include likewiſe a departure from Chriſtian communion with the church. They themſelves know beſt how far the departure ought to be, which they recommend; as it is a direction which none of the inſpired writers have once mentioned. The firſt, however, viz. a demiſſion of office, muſt, at leaſt, be meant. This, I own, ſeems to be regarded among them as a very light matter. One of them deſerted the ſervice of our glorious Maſter, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to work for the playhouſe; and yet is ſtill careſſed among them, continues an ordinary member of the General Aſſembly, and is an uſeful inſtrument in promoting their meaſures. But all their brethren have not ſo ſlight a ſenſe, either of that union and communion upon which our Saviour and his apoſtles lay ſo much ſtreſs, or of the obligation they are under to the duties of their office; and the exerciſe of their miniſtry among a people, to whom they ſtand in the relation of a paſtor, and for whoſe ſouls they have a deep concern.

As duty obliges us to keep our ſtation; ſo, if we were to conſider the matter in another light, I would fain know, what good reaſon can be given, why a man that is conſcious of no fault, ſhould inflict upon himſelf ſo ſevere a puniſhment, as is implied in throwing up his office and benefice, renouncing at once, perhaps, a ſituation of comfort and uſefulneſs, and (ſuppoſing him to have a wife and children) the very bread of himſelf and his family. How abſurd is it to imagine, that one ought, without compulſion, and without authority, not only to paſs, but actually to execute a ſentence againſt himſelf, which he could not but look upon as an act of the moſt grievous tyranny, had that

very judgment been given by his lawful ſuperiors? Is not this, likewiſe. having an active hand in what he looks upon as a ſin?

And if a miniſter was entirely diveſted of all regard for himſelf, why ſhould he involve his innocent people in ſuch a puniſhment as his deſertion of them might poſſibly be? I have known a miniſter's pariſhioners, ſuch of them eſpecially as had the deepeſt concern for the intereſt of religion, expreſs the warmeſt wiſhes and prayers for the continuance of his life, particularly in the proſpect of the condition the pariſh might be reduced to upon a vacancy. Suppoſe ſuch an one ordered to do what appeared to be ſinful, would this be a ſufficient ground for him, voluntarily to haſten the dreaded vacancy, and to precipitate them into the power of a patron, who might force upon them an idle and uſeleſs intruder?

Indeed this curious plan, could they perſuade their oppoſers into it, (for it is what they have no uſe for themſelves), is admirably calculated for increaſing their own power, and weakening the ſtrength of the oppoſition to their meaſures. But is this a conſideration that will recommend it to any of thoſe who have occaſion for it? On the contrary, is it not one of the ſtrongeſt arguments againſt it? When once the corrupt part of a church have got a majority in the ſupreme judicatory; if the few honeſt members were as ready to take the hint, as they are to give it, this would be the eaſieſt and the ſureſt way in the world for them to get rid of all oppoſition at once, and would put it in their power to accelerate the deſtruction of religion, at a moſt prodigious rate indeed.

But can they produce one precept or one example out of the Bible, to countenance it? Many a time were the prophets expreſsly prohibited by their ſuperiors, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, to preach their diſagreeable doctrine. They diſobeyed the unrighteous commands: but not a word of their leaving the ſociety, or deſerting their ſtation. Had the apoſtles, when they were commanded by the Jewiſh ſanhedrim, *not to ſpeak at all, nor teach in the name of Jeſus*, quietly retired, without any farther noiſe, according to the doctrine now in vogue among us; there would have been an end of the Chriſtian religion, before it was well begun. Our Saviour himſelf was often interdicted by the ſame court, and excommunicated for diſobedience. But, tho' he owned that they ſat in Moſes' ſeat, and injoined his diſciples to give a due obedience to all their juſt commands; yet when their commands to himſelf were not ſo, he has left us no example of either obedience, or leaving the ſociety. It cannot at all be pretended, that this is a caſe which there was no occaſion for touching upon in the ſcripture. On the contrary, it is a caſe that very frequently occurs. How will our preſent caſuiſts be

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able to account for it, not only that they have not one example to produce in favour of their doctrine, but that every inſtance is againſt it?

Many other arguments upon this, as well as other branches of this controverſy, were urged at much greater length, ſeveral years ago, when the occaſion was firſt given for it, by the infamous depoſition of Mr Gilleſpie. And we are, ſurely, entitled to look upon them as unanſwerable, ſeeing our adverſaries, though they began to defend themſelves before the public, and diſcovered ſome inclination, had it been in their power, to convince us by reaſoning, were entirely beaten off the field, and have never, to this day, ſo much as pretended to refute them. For their own ſakes, I think, they ſhould not pretend that they are able to ſolve the objections that were then made to their conduct. For what can we think of men, who are able to diſabuſe us, as to an error, which they ſee appears to us in a very plauſible light, but will not be at the pains to do it? who chuſe to leave their own character under a reproach, which they have it in their power to remove; and who tell us in effect, "We can "carry on our meaſures without you, and cruſh you, if you "prove refractory; and therefore we will not give ourſelves the "trouble to ſatisfy your judgments, or to remove thoſe errors "that may involve your families in poverty and diſtreſs."

Before I leave this ſubject, I ſhall only obſerve, that, during the debate, there happened an unlucky argument to be made uſe of by one who appeared on the ſame ſide of the queſtion with me, which gave me ſome concern. He argued for a mitigation of the cenſure upon Mr Gilleſpie, becauſe it had already produced the effect that was aimed at by it. And, for confirmation of this, he obſerved, that, ever ſince that time, there has not been any occaſion for repeating it; all the ſettlements ordered by the Aſſembly having been quietly executed. I was apprehenſive at the time, that thoſe on the other ſide would take advantage of this conceſſion; as indeed they did, and inferred the wiſdom of the meaſure from the ſucceſs which was aſcribed to it.

What makes me take notice of it, is in order to wipe off an aſperſion, which, by the uſe that was made of it, ſeemed to be thrown upon the preſent miniſters of the eſtabliſhed church; as if we were all ſo intimidated by this high ſtroke of policy, that none now durſt run the riſk of a refuſal. It is true, there has not happened, ſince that time, ſuch another conteſt between the Aſſembly and any individual miniſters. But what is the reaſon of this? The true reaſon of it is, not the effect which that ſeverity has had upon conſcientious people; but the contrary, the effect it has produced upon the prevailing party. The truth is, (if they had the modeſty to own it), the indignant reception

which that meaſure met with, and the viſible inability of all the perſecutors for conſcience ſake to vindicate it, has taught them the prudence, not to put their authority to the ſame hazard of being diſputed. Several members of the Preſbytery of Hamilton, lately, had a ſcruple about executing the ſettlement of the Shotts. But the Aſſembly was ſo wiſe, as to accept of its being done by ſuch as had freedom to do it, without inſiſting rigorouſly and tyrannically upon its being done by them who thought it a ſin, as was done in Mr Gilleſpie's caſe, to the amazement of all who had the leaſt idea of the ſacred rights of conſcience.

We never denied a paſſive ſubmiſſion to be incumbent, even in caſes where we could not give active obedience. We make a very great difference between the two. When once the queſtion comes to be concerning our own actions, to be ſure, if there is ſuch a thing as private judgment, then or never is it to be exerciſed. And does any one think ſo meanly of this church, as if Mr Gilleſpie had not left a brother behind him who has the courage to act as he did, in the caſe of a like temptation? Suppoſe we were to be told by our brethren who had power to execute their threatenings, as Mr Gilleſpie was in effect, though not in theſe very words, "You muſt do what you eſteem a deliberate and "voluntary ſin, and what, we muſt own, would really be a ſin "in you, ſince you think it ſo, and conſequently run the riſk "of eternal damnation; or we will do you the greateſt tempo-"ral hurt in our power." If this, or equivalent language was ever again to come from the General Aſſembly, I hope there are not a few ſtill amongſt us who would be enabled by grace to ſhew, that they do not fear men, who can only kill (or ſtarve) the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but that they fear him who can caſt both ſoul and body into hell.

SECTION XI.

The CONCLUSION.

AND now, dear Sir, that I have gone through ſeveral of the actings of the laſt Aſſembly, I believe you will be ſatisfied, that the proofs of their being under the influence of a worldly ſpirit, and of the alarming want of any due concern for the intereſt of religion among the majority, are rather too many and too ſtrong. Would to God, they had been fewer, and leſs deciſive.

I know, it has been often complained of, that divines, in their controverſies, are too apt to take an invidious advantage of one another, by loading the opinions of their antagoniſts with impiety, and rather expoſing their perſons to reproach, than ſhew-

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ing the falſehood of their tenets. This is what, I think, Le Clerc, in his Logics, calls *argumentum theologicum ab invidia ductum.* I am ready to acknowledge, that there is ſometimes juſt ground given for this complaint, when, in arguing, perhaps, upon ſome ſpeculative point, impious conſequences are faſtened upon one who refuſes to admit them, and inſinuations are made, that theſe very inferences muſt needs influence the heart and life of one who does not ſee any connection between them and his opinion, and whoſe behaviour is not the ſubject of diſpute. But this is a very different caſe from the preſent, where the diſpute is concerning actions, whether they be ſinful or not? Here the very queſtion is, whether our late meaſures are not plainly dictated by a worldly ſpirit? and the thing undertaken to be proved, is, that they manifeſtly indicate a moſt alarming want of due concern for the intereſt of religion among us. No body will pretend to ſay, that this is impoſſible, or what never did, or can happen in a church; or that the evidences of it may not be very clear and perceptible. If this is truly the caſe with us at preſent, there can be neither injuſtice nor unfairneſs in ſetting theſe evidences in an obvious point of light. May not this be, ſometimes, not only uſeful, but neceſſary? If the character of the actors be hurt thereby, they have themſelves only to blame.

But the great queſtion with us is, What is to be done by ourſelves in the preſent circumſtances? Is there any hope of ſucceſs by oppoſition to their meaſures? Or ſhall we indolently ſuffer ſo viſible corruption to proceed with giant-ſtrides?

For my part, I ſhall readily acknowledge, that my hopes of ſeeing things take a better turn, are very ſmall. When once a church or a nation has got our length in degeneracy, I expect to ſee things grow worſe, before they grow better. Both the nature of things, and the uſual courſe of providence, convince me of this. Irreligion, I doubt not, will increaſe more and more amongſt us, till it involve us in ſome public calamity, which, by the bleſſing of God, may prove a more effectual cure, than we are now capable of.

At the ſame time, I am far from thinking, that this diſmal proſpect, diſcouraging as it is, gives us any diſpenſation from exerting ourſelves to the utmoſt. Even when a patient is paſt all hopes of recovery, a good deal may be done, in the way of palliatives, for retarding, at leaſt, the progreſs of the diſeaſe. Many a broken conſtitution, which, if neglected, would have gone to pieces, has, by care and pains, been maintained, and the life lengthened out far beyond expectation, if not in the full vigour of health, yet in a tolerably-comfortable way.

Let us only conſider, what condition this church might have been in by this time, had there been no oppoſition to the prevailing

vailing meaſures. If preſentations, for example, had been as ſaleable a commodity, as our managers are ſtriving to make them; would not our eyes have been long ago offended by the advertiſements which would have been in the news-papers, of ſuch a living to be diſpoſed of, that was vacant, or perhaps likely ſoon to be ſo? And had the deſtruction of our diſcipline been as entire and effectual, as the majority in our Aſſemblies are, evidently, aiming at; would not the ſight of a drunken miniſter ſtaggering in our ſtreets, be more frequent than it is yet? And might not ſome of them, by this time, have been keeping their whores or concubines, with as little reſerve as many other gentlemen are now doing?

But whatever be the ſucceſs of our endeavours, (which may be better than our hopes), it is not events, or the proſpect of them, by which our conduct is to be altogether regulated. If our lot be caſt in evil times or evil places, our buſineſs is to keep our own garments clean, to ſee that the progreſs of corruption be not owing to any fault of ourſelves, either of commiſſion, or even of omiſſion. The ſlothful ſervant is, by our Maſter, regarded as a wicked ſervant, and will be puniſhed accordingly. Let us do our duty, and leave events to God. It was a good ſpeech of a man who, upon the whole, had but an indifferent character, with which I ſhall conclude this epiſtle, 2 Sam. x. 12. *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, And for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

FINIS.